

Characteristics of Biblical Worship

adapted from

Worship: The Christian's Highest Occupation

by Alfred Parks Gibbs

Gen 22:1 And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham: and he said, Behold, here I am.

2 And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.

3 And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son, and clave the wood for the burnt offering, and rose up, and went unto the place of which God had told him.

4 Then on the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes, and saw the place afar off.

5 And Abraham said unto his young men, Abide ye here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you.

6 And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering, and laid it upon Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife; and they went both of them together.

7 And Isaac spake unto Abraham his father, and said, My father: and he said, Here am I, my son. And he said, Behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?

8 And Abraham said, My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering: so they went both of them together.

9 And they came to the place which God had told him of; and Abraham built an altar there, and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood.

10 And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son.

11 And the angel of the LORD called unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham: and he said, Here am I.

12 And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me.

13 And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold behind him a ram caught in a thicket by his horns: and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in the stead of his son.

14 And Abraham called the name of that place Jehovahjireh: as it is said to this day, In the mount of the LORD it shall be seen.

15 And the angel of the LORD called unto Abraham out of heaven the second time,

16 And said, By myself have I sworn, saith the LORD, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son:

17 That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies;

18 And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice.

- a. **Worship is based on a revelation from God (vs 1-2).** Abraham responded to God's word. The worship of the Lord, as also the work of the lord, must be guided by the word of the Lord. The believer's authority in worship is not the traditions of men, nor the subtle reasons of human wisdom, but the clear revelation of God's word.
- b. **Worship is conditioned by faith in, and obedience to Divine revelation.** Abraham obeyed unconditionally. He responded to God's word. The primary and active ingredient is faith (*Heb 11: 17 By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son.*)

- c. **Worship costs something.** Essential to the heart of worship is the idea of sacrifice. Abraham offered his only son. Also note David: *2 Sam 24: And the king said unto Araunah, Nay; but I will surely buy it of thee at a price: neither will I offer burnt offerings unto the LORD my God of that which doth cost me nothing. So David bought the threshingfloor and the oxen for fifty shekels of silver.* Worship is not a cheap thing, to be offered thoughtlessly or carelessly, with no sense of the self-sacrifice involved. Worship involves considerable cost to the believer, in the outlay of time for spiritual preparation; in the effort of Bible study; in the impact to social and business needs, and in the outlay of money.
- d. **Worship necessitates a deliberate separation unto God.** (*Gen 22:5 And Abraham said unto his young men, Abide ye here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you.*) There was a separation from the ordinary to enter into the extraordinary. Unlawful and distracting thoughts must be dealt with in the same uncompromising manner as Abraham dealt with these two young men. There is a separation by a definite decision of the will, to abide outside of our meditations on the ordinary, lest they rob God of the worship due to His name. This calls for real concentration of thought, and the repudiation of all self interests. (*Heb 10: 22 Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith...*)
- e. **Worship involves the absolute denial of self, in all its varied forms.** When Abraham said he was going to worship, he knew that it meant the offering up of his son, and this involved utter self-abnegation (denial of self). This denial of self is entirely contrary to the flesh with its desire for self-will, self-esteem and self-expression. There must be no intrusion of the flesh in true spiritual worship. (*Phil 3:3 For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.*) Abraham approached God, with his son, to worship; so the head of the family, with their family, must come to God in Christ, through Christ, and with Christ.
- f. **Worship must glorify God.** (*Gen 22:16 And said, By myself have I sworn, saith the LORD, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son: 17 That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; 18 And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice.*) This act of worship by Abraham delighted God's heart, which brought forth and expression of His appreciation. (*Psalm 50:23 Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me: and to him that ordereth his conversation aright will I show the salvation of God.*) Worship gives to God the place of absolute pre-eminence and thus glorifies Him, to the exclusion of all others.
- g. **Worship results in blessing to the worshipper.** (*Gen 22:16...because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son: 17 That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; 18 And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice.*) God gave back to Abraham his son. Though Abraham may have ascended the mountain with a heavy burden, he certainly descended it with a happy song on his lips and joy in his heart. This is what God does to the believer; He gives back to him His beloved Son, in all the glory of His blessed Person, and grant to him a far greater appreciation of all those Divine attributes expressed by Him. It is significant that in the text, we hear no more of Isaac until it is in connection with his bride, Rebecca. The son of promise is part of the ultimate sacrifice and then his wedding. So it is with Christ. The last look the world had of Jesus was at the cross. The next sight will be when He is manifested in glory with His bride. It is to this that worship points forward in anticipation.