

## Genesis 22 The Akedah

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### 1-2, Prologue

#### 1a, God did tempt Abraham

This statement leads to two questions: what does it mean, and why does God do it?

**What does it mean**, especially in light of James 1:13? Empirically, there is no question that God is said to “tempt” people, but not to evil. Consider the following examples, using the same verb (05254, “test, tempt, try, prove”):

	Object	Name of God	Manner	Purpose
Gen 22:1	Abraham	haelohim	Command to sacrifice his son	Exam: 12, “for now I know that thou fearest God”
Ex 15:22-26	Israel	YHWH	Lack of water	(per Dt 8:2, Exam)
Ex 16:4	Israel	YHWH	Command to gather only a certain amount of manna each day	Exam, “whether they will walk in my law, or no”
Ex 20:18-20	Israel	haelohim	Terrifying apparition of God on Mount Sinai	Exercise: “that his fear may be before your faces, that ye sin not.”
Dt 8:2	Israel	YHWH eloheka	The extended wandering in the wilderness	Exam: “to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no”
Dt 8:16	Israel	YHWH eloheka	The manna	Exercise: “to do thee good at thy latter end”
Jg 2:21-22	Israel	YHWH	Pagan nations in the land	Exam: “whether they will keep the way of the LORD to walk therein, as their fathers did keep it, or not”
Jg 3:1-4	Israel	YHWH	Pagan nations in the land	Exam: 4, “to know whether they would hearken unto the commandments of the LORD”
2Ch 32:31	Hezekiah	haelohim	God abandoned Hezekiah before the ambassadors of Babylon	Exam: “that he might know all that was in his heart”
Ps 26:2	David	YHWH		

Per James, God never tempts to lead people into evil. When God tests or tempts, he has one of two purposes:

1. Exam: to make manifest some quality of the person being tested (which is the case in Gen 22).
2. Exercise: to improve the person being tested

This leads to a second question: **Why the exams?** How can we reconcile this with God's omniscience? Doesn't God already know what we will do? Yes: compare this passage with the Lord's aside to himself in 18:19. He has purposed Abraham's obedience from the first, so he knows it will come to pass. But it is not obedience until Abraham obeys, and God does not say to him, "I know you are obedient" until he obeys. The point of v.12 is not just that God knows, but that he tells Abraham that he knows.

The issue here is central to the doctrine of "eternal security" or "assurance" that is so popular in evangelical circles. As it is usually phrased, this doctrine is defective. How do we know the state of our own hearts before the Lord? The same way we know anything else: by knowing that God knows it. The only true knowledge is knowledge that reflects what is in the mind of God. Until God says to us, "I know X," we cannot know it.

It has pleased God to reveal his knowledge of our faith in him through our perseverance.

- Rom 8:9-17 indicates that his Spirit bears witness with our Spirit that we are the sons of God. He says to us, "Now I know that you fear God." But look at the context: those to whom he thus speaks are those who "mortify the deeds of the body" and "are led by the Spirit of God."
- At the end of his first epistle, John explains that he has written "these things" so that we might know that we have eternal life (5:13). "These things" are numerous practical tests of our relationship with God:
  - 2:9-11, loving the brethren
  - 2:29, doing righteousness
  - 3:6-10, not sinning
  - 3:14; 18-19 "assure our hearts", 4:7-8, love for the brethren
  - 4:15, confessing that Jesus is the Son of God
  - 4:20, loving the brethren
  - 5:5, overcoming the world
- Heb 6:9-12 tells us where we get our "full assurance of hope": from "diligent" pursuit of our "work and labor of love."

God knows our faith from the beginning, but he only tells us that he knows it when we have demonstrated it by our obedience, and only when he tells us that he knows it can we truly know it. We are saved by faith alone, but we gain assurance of that faith as we see the Spirit of God strengthening us in daily obedience and submission to him. We have seen Abraham's many failings along the way, and they might well cause him to question his relation with the Lord. But now, having come through this test, he can fully know what God has known all along.

This is why God's saints patiently accept God's testing: they know the deceitfulness of their own hearts, and welcome the assurance and purification that he brings. Examples:

- Psa 19:12, "Who can understand *his* errors? cleanse thou me from secret *faults*."
- Jer 17:9, 10, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it? 10 I the LORD search the heart, *I* try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, *and* according to the fruit of his doings.

- Ps 139:23,24, “Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: 24 And see if *there be any* wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.”
- 1 Cor 4:3-5, “But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man’s judgment: yea, I judge not mine own self. 4 For I know nothing by myself; yet am I not hereby justified: but he that judgeth me is the Lord. 5 Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God.”

These saints struggled with the weakness of their own flesh, and embraced the Lord’s testing as his way of confirming their relation to him.

### **1b, The Call: “Abraham”**

This is the first time that God explicitly calls Abraham by name. Other times he just appears and starts talking (e.g., 12:1,7; 13:14; 15:1; 17:1, ...). Here he summons him by name, and waits for him to respond. Meaning?

- Other uses of the summons by name: always caring. God does not speak this way when he accosts Abimelech over sin with Sarah (20:3), or in reprimanding Laban over his abuse of Jacob (31:24)
  - 22:11, when the angel interrupts the sacrifice (double name)
  - 31:11, calling Jacob to return to Canaan from Haran (single; previous appearances of God to Jacob without name in 28:13; cf. also 35:1)
  - 46:2, calling Jacob to reassure him about going into Egypt (double)
  - Exod 3:4, God calling Moses out of the bush
  - Samuel, 1 Sam 3:1-10 (in a time when there was no frequent vision; Abraham’s last revelation from the Lord was in 21:12, when Isaac was at most three, and now he is a young lad, able to carry the wood, v. 6).
  - Acts 9:10, God calling Ananias to send him to Saul
- Isa 43:1, a sign of God’s special care for him. Not just an impersonal confrontation with God’s numinous power, but a personal encounter.

Thus at this moment of most severe testing, God approaches Abraham in the most personal, tender way, assuring him that this undertaking is for good, not evil. As the exx show, Abraham’s response is the standard way of replying to such a summons.

### **2, The Request**

**Take now.**—This phrasing is striking. In Hebrew, the request reads literally, “Please take.” In general, the word “please” is used by a less powerful person addressing a more powerful one. In Genesis through Numbers, out of eleven times that people ask God for something, ten times they use “please,” while out of seventy times that God tells people to do something, only seven times does he say “Please” (Wilt, section 5.3, refs not given). He certainly has never spoken with Abraham in this way before. Again we see how tender the Lord is in introducing Abraham to this

trial, as though to reassure him that in spite of the horror that he is about to face, he is under the care of a God who loves him and will watch over him.

**thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest.**—Each phrase builds on the previous one to emphasize how precious Isaac is to him:

- “thy son,” in whom the entire promise of the future seed is rooted;
- “thine only son,” particularly now that Ishmael, with God’s approval, has been exiled from the family;
- “Isaac,” the son who brings laughter and joy;
- “whom thou lovest,” particularly dear to Abraham.

**and get thee into the land of Moriah; ... upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.**—The phrasing here is strikingly similar to that in 12:1, “Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father’s house, unto a land that I will shew thee.” In both cases we have

- “get thee,” lit. “go for thyself.” The expression emphasizes that Abraham is to separate himself from the group; that this is an individual ordeal that he must face alone.
- A description of family sacrifice (leaving his family in 12:1; offering Isaac here)
- A statement of the destination as something unknown when he sets out, but to be identified by God as he goes.

This similarity between 12:1 and 22:2 is deliberate. It shows us this final test as the conclusion of the process that God began with Abraham perhaps 40 years earlier (if Isaac is 15 at this point, Abraham is 115 based on 21:5, and he was 75 when leaving Haran, 12:4).

There is one important contrast. In ch. 12, the command was given as the condition for a blessing. Here there is no associated blessing, just the command.

**and offer him there for a burnt offering.**—In Hebrew, this terrifying command occupies only three words, but they must have struck like a knife into Abraham’s heart.

- It is not new for him to be challenged to strike out into the unknown at God’s command.
- It is not new for him to be severed from family, even to the point of exiling Ishmael, but there he could recognize in his own sin the necessity for the separation.
- But here is the son of promise, the one of whom God has said, “In Isaac shall thy seed be called” (21:12), and promised that his covenant would be established with Isaac and with Isaac’s seed (17:19,21). That covenant is the means by which God will bless all nations (12:3). Our Savior taught that Abraham looked forward to the coming of the mediator (John 8:56), so Abraham “necessarily inferred, that his own salvation, and that of the whole human race, would perish, unless Isaac remained in safety. ... [Now] he is commanded with his own hand to slay him, ... to cut in pieces, or cast into the fire, the charter of his salvation, and to have nothing left for himself, but death and hell” (Calvin).

John King has captured the point of the temptation eloquently. “God’s usual manner of trying the faith of his people is, by causing the dispensations of his providence apparently to contradict his word, and requiring them still to rely upon that word, notwithstanding the apparent

inconsistency. But in Abraham's trial, He proposed a test far more severe. For His own command, or word, was in direct contradiction to what he had before spoken." Calvin again: "If, when we are deprived of the sword of the Spirit, we are overcome, what would be our condition were God himself to attack us with the very sword, with which he had been wont to arm us?"

Why would God thus pose one word against another? Perhaps to make clear to Abraham the difference between promise and command, between blessing and duty.

Abraham's response to the *promise* in his early years was to try to make it happen himself:

- He would sacrifice Sarah to keep himself alive so that he could beget the promised seed.
- He and Sarah strive in the strength of the flesh to produce the seed.

But the promise is not his responsibility to achieve; it is God's. He must not let his desire for it lead him to violate God's clear *commands*. Those define his duty, and he must execute it even if it appears that he is throwing away God's promises.

A modern example is Matt 6:25-34. God has *promised* to feed and clothe us, and it is right for us to be grateful to him for our employment as a means of delivering that promise. He has also *commanded* us to seek first his kingdom. If our hunger for the promise leads us to shirk on the command, we have fallen into the trap.

- The appropriate response to promises is gratitude, not fleshly effort.
- The appropriate response to commands is obedience, not compromise.

### 3, Journey to Moriah

For the third time in the narrative, Abraham "rises up early in the morning."

- The first time, in 19:27, he did so like a child on Christmas morning, to see whether the Lord had granted his request concerning Sodom and Gomorrah.
- Next, in 21:14, he arose early to send Hagar and Ishmael away. This was a discipline of obedience: do not linger, lest you be tempted. (Contrast the hesitation of Lot's wife in 19:26.) Yet, in spite of the pain, there was a clear purpose. Sarah had suggested, and the Lord confirmed, that God's promise concerning Isaac could not be realized if Ishmael remained in the household.
- Now once again he demonstrates the discipline of arising early to forestall temptation. But this time his obedience is not encouraged by any motive. It seems rather an obedience that will shatter all his hopes. All the more reason not to brood on it, but to obey instantly.

He takes two servants. Shouldn't they be the ones to saddle the ass and cleave the wood? But this is to be his sacrifice, and he must bear the burden. I suspect he took the servants to occupy Isaac on the way. He is too distraught to discuss the matter with his son. He will not dally and risk disobedience, but while on the way he must have time to think and pray.

Yet he appears confused. The order of the events attests to his deeply disturbed state of mind. One would expect he would cleave the wood before saddling the ass and calling the servants and Isaac.

Finally, they are on their way to find the place that God had announced. Where is this “Moriah”? God has not told him yet, but we learn from 2 Chron 3:1 that it is the temple mount in Jerusalem.

- Abraham encountered this region once before, after his return from the slaughter of the kings, when its king Melchizedek met him with refreshment and a blessing (14:18-20).
- Now he will find himself back in the same place, facing an awful sacrifice. God’s blessings are unconditional, but they call us to unquestioning obedience.
- The name itself is somewhat enigmatic, but it seems best to derive it from the verb “to see,” with a weak consonant assimilated (*moriyyah* rather than *mor’iyyah*): Hophal ptc of *r’h* plus theophoric, “the manifestation of YHWH” or “the provision of YHWH.”

## 4-10, Offering Isaac

**4, On the third day.**—Beersheba is about 50 miles from Jerusalem. What a strange journey this must have been! The old man did not deliberate with God about the command before setting out, but now he has plenty of time to agonize over what is about to happen. One imagines Isaac and the servants occupying themselves with the details of the journey, chatting as they travel, while Abraham marches resolutely, absorbed in meditation and prayer, wrestling with the implications of the obedience he has already resolved to yield to God. Finally, Abraham sees the place on the horizon, and God confirms that it is the intended sanctuary.

**5, Abraham said....**—He leaves the servants to make camp, and proceeds alone with Isaac. At this point we see the fruit of his agonizing meditation during the journey. He has finally managed to reconcile in his mind the promise and the command. His words to the servants are telling: all of the final three verbs are plural. Not only will Isaac accompany him to “go” and to “worship,” but also to “come again.”

Some have thought this statement nothing more than deception, or the confused babbling of a greatly stressed old man, or even a last-minute doubt whether he would go through with the offering. But Hebrews 11:19 specifically attributes to Abraham the belief that God would raise Isaac from the dead after the sacrifice, and this phrase appears to attest to the formation of that faith in his mind. He is prepared to obey, yet he believes God’s promise, and the only reconciliation he can find between the command and the promise is that God would raise his son from the dead after the offering is complete. Was not Isaac born to a man and a woman as good as dead? If God could do that, couldn’t he bring Isaac to life once again out of death? So he insists to the servants, “we will come again to you.”

With these words, Abraham emerges from his struggle with the command. It will be unbelievably painful, but it will not be hopeless. God will restore his son, and the promise will be fulfilled.

**6, Abraham took ...**—Abraham is too old to carry the wood; Isaac must bear that for him. But Abraham carries the implements of destruction, the censor of live coals and the knife.

**They went both of them together.**—Amos 3:3 echoes almost exactly this same phrase, and is the only place in the OT that uses this combination of words other than here and v.7: “Can two walk together except they be agreed?” Amos’ insight focuses our attention on the perfect concord between father and son. Isaac does not yet know the full details of the sacrifice, but he trusts implicitly in his father, who for his part loves his son unfailingly.

**7, Isaac spake.**—Isaac is perplexed about the missing element of the offering. He asks his father, using the same form of polite address that the Lord used in v.1, and Abraham responds as he did there. Where is the lamb?

**8, Abraham said.**—Abraham is not ready yet to explain to Isaac all the details of the sacrifice, but his answer shows his trust in the Lord. “Himself” is an indirect object, not a direct object. The statement is not that God will become the lamb (although ultimately that is what happened, in the Lord Jesus). Rather, it is that God will provide the lamb for himself. Four points to note in this:

1. The lamb is for God. The purpose of the sacrifice is for him, and it must meet his standards. How often our human efforts at worship stumble at this point. The idea of worship is not to make us feel good; it is to submit ourselves before our creator at his direction.
2. The lamb must come from him. The insight here is the same David had 800 years later when he endowed the building of the temple: “All things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee,” 1 Chr 29:14.
3. The Hebrew verb form here can be translated either as present or as future. Thus the statement is ambiguous: “God will provide,” or “God provides.” At this point Abraham still expects Isaac to be the lamb, but he realizes that Isaac is himself a gift of God, one that God can take back at any time.
4. “Provide” is literally, “see to.” This statement is one more reference to the theme of “seeing” throughout the chapter: Moriah is the hill where God causes himself to be seen; Abraham sees the place; God sees to the sacrifice. (In fact, English “provide” comes from “pro-videre,” to foresee a need and make arrangements to take care of it ahead of time.)

The final refrain in v.8 emphasizes once more Isaac’s complete trust in his father, and the father’s love for him, as they progress to the place of sacrifice.

**9, preparation for sacrifice.**—The narrative is absolutely austere, devoid of any embellishment or attempt at drama. As Isaac watches, Abraham builds the altar and sets the wood on it. One would think that if Isaac must carry the wood, surely he would help to build the altar, but Abraham will not let him. This is Abraham’s sacrifice.

Moses does not tell us just when Abraham reveals to Isaac the nature of the sacrifice, but it surely must be by the time he binds Isaac and lays him on the wood. Ps 118:27 records the practice of binding the victim.

By this point, Isaac is a willing participant in the sacrifice. He could surely have overpowered his father and fled. I imagine that Abraham explains to him the whole story: the awful divine command, the tension between the command and the promise, the resolution that Abraham has reached in terms of the hope of resurrection.

For every young person in a believing family, there comes a decision whether to accept or reject their parents’ faith. This is such a time for Isaac.

- Abraham’s commitment to obey God is so great that it requires him to sacrifice his son. Isaac must share that commitment to agree to be slain.

- Abraham's trust in God's promise is so great that he expects his son to be raised from the dead. Such a hope must have strengthened Isaac as he submits.

This episode also shows that parents must not hesitate to challenge their children with full obedience to, and trust in, God. It would have been wrong for Abraham to disobey, arguing, "Isaac can't handle that."

**10, Abraham stretched ... took ...** .—Note carefully the point at which the angel interrupts Abraham. In spite of a number of classical paintings on this theme, he does not stretch out his hand *with* the knife, but rather to *take* the knife. It is the act of picking up the knife that shows his commitment to carry through with the command.

## 11-12, Commendation

Once more the angel of the Lord appears. Note, as always, the mixture of third-person and first-person references to God in this individual:

- "thou fearest God" (as though God is someone else)
- "thou has not withheld thy son ... from me" (as though it is the speaker who requested the offering)

He has appeared to Hagar twice, the first time (while she was still in Abraham's house) as the angel of the Lord, the second time (after her exile) as the angel of God. Abraham's dealings have always been directly with the Lord himself. This is the only time the mediator appears to him. Is this instance specifically in view in the Lord's words in John 8:56? Perhaps there is a connection with the persistence of the promised seed and the coming of the Messiah.

We have already discussed the implications of the statement, "Now I know that thou fearest God." The security of our salvation rests, not in what we know, but in what God knows. The crucial thing is to know that God knows we are his, and the greatest blessing is when he reveals this knowledge to us.

This paragraph is a turning point in the chapter. We see this in three ways. (See handout.)

1. The speaker is here introduced as the angel of the Lord, not the angel of God. Throughout the first half of the story, the deity is always referred to as "God," never "the Lord" (1, 3, 8, 9). He speaks with the awesome authority of the creator, but his mysterious command seems the very antithesis of covenant faithfulness. From this point on in the story, he becomes "the Lord," the covenant God (14, 15, 16). He was this all along, of course, but from the human perspective sometimes we are unable to understand his dealings in these terms.
2. God's reference to "thy son, thy only son" echoes the command in v.2 and the later commendation in v.16, following Lund's fourth law of chiasm.
3. At this point, Isaac disappears from the narrative. Even in the narrative of Abraham's return to Beersheba (v.19), there is no mention of him. It is as though Abraham has sacrificed him, delivered him over to God.

## 13-14, Offering the Ram (answering to 4-10)

Three parallels tie this section with 4-10, and suggest that 11-12 is the peak:



- Abraham lifted up his eyes (4, 13a)
- The offering (10, 13b)
- The name of the place (14), corresponding to Abraham’s promise to Isaac in v.8.

**Lifted up his eyes.**—Before, he saw the terrible mount, the place where he must offer his son. Now he sees God’s provision of a substitute. cf. Hagar in 21:19. The provision was there, just as Abraham had promised Isaac, but he didn’t see it until the Lord spoke with him. How important it is to stay in touch with the Lord if we are to make the most of the world around us.

**In the stead of his son.**—Note the clear teaching here of the substitutionary aspect of the ram.

**Jehovah Jireh.**—Literally, “The Lord will provide,” echoing his words to Isaac in v.8, “God will provide.” Now, however, he refers to the providing one as the covenant Lord.

The explanatory statement about the mount of the Lord uses a passive form of the same verb. Probably we should translate in the same way: “provision is made,” or “it is provided.” (And in this case, the point of Moriah is not “the manifestation of YHWH,” but “the provision of YHWH.”)

### 15-18, Promise (answering to command in v.2)

Verses 15-18 correspond to the command in v.2, and 19 to 3-5. We noted before that v.2 uncharacteristically gave a command without an accompanying promise, and that the command was similar to that in 12:1. The promise was not lost, but only delayed, and now we hear it, an amplification of the promise in 12:2-3.

**By myself have I sworn.**—The Lord embodies his promise in a solemn oath. He did not do so in ch. 12, and in fact this is the only oath that God swears to men in the patriarchal narratives. Heb 6:17 recalls this event when it speaks of God’s confirming his promise by an oath.

**Because thou hast done this thing ... because thou has obeyed my voice.**—The repetition and amplification of the promise of 12:2-3 is wrapped between statements that indicate a causal relationship to Abraham’s obedience. Some have taken this to indicate that God’s blessings depend on Abraham’s worthiness, but this neglects the fact that they were originally given unconditionally (though coupled with commands). Heb 6 may be our clue here. Abraham’s obedience brings, not the *fact* of God’s blessing, but the *assurance* of it in this solemn oath.

**Content of the promise.**—Compare this with 12:2,3.

22:17-18	12:2-3
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 I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great
and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies	3 And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee
18 And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed	and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.

The original blessing had two parts, each associated with a command:

1. Leave your family, and I will give you another even greater
2. Be a blessing, and I will bless others through you, conditional on their treatment of you.

Each of these is amplified here.

1. The family blessing on Abraham (12:2) is amplified.
  - The original “I will bless thee” becomes “blessing, I will bless thee.” This is an emphatic construction that means, “I will surely bless thee.”
  - The original reference to a “great nation” and a “great name” become a promise that Abraham’s seed, though hanging by the slender thread of Isaac, will become like the stars of the heaven and the sand on the sea shore. The first of these was already promised in ch. 15, the point at which Abraham considered the stars and his faith was counted for righteousness. The second is new (although Abraham was promised that his seed would be like the dust of the earth in 13:16).
2. The promise of the blessing is transferred from Abraham to his seed.
  - The curse on those who curse him becomes the promise that his seed will possess the gate of their enemies.
  - All families of the earth will now be blessed, not just in Abraham, but in his seed.

This latter detail of the oath is particularly significant. The Psalms speak of an oath by God to David concerning the future Messiah (89:3; 132:11), yet the narratives describing God’s promises to David (2 Sam 7 and parallel in Chronicles) do not mention this oath. Luther observed that the Psalms are appropriating to David this oath to Abraham. When God tells David that the messiah promised to Abraham will come through him, that promise carries with it the assurance of this oath in Gen 22.

## 19, Journey Home (answering to 3-5)

This return journey corresponds to the journey out. Note that Isaac is not mentioned, though he must have been part of the group. Abraham has made his sacrifice.

## 20-24, Abraham’s Nephews and Nieces

For the promises concerning Abraham’s offspring to be confirmed, we need not only the survival of Isaac, but also a wife. This paragraph lays the foundation for that requirement, tracing the genealogy of Rebekah. Note that she is two generations from Abraham’s generation, unlike Isaac, who is born so late in Abraham’s life that he is only one generation offset.

## The Akedah in the NT

This story is echoed in two ways in the New Testament. It teaches us about the depth of God’s love for us, and about the nature of the faith we owe to God.

**Our faith toward God.**—The more explicit echo consists of references to this event in describing Abraham’s faith in God (Heb 11:17-19) and the resulting obedience (James 2:21-24). This episode emphasizes that true faith yields radical obedience. It challenges all of us to examine the depth of our commitment to the Lord.

**God's love to us.**—The NT makes the measure of God's love for us that he offered up his own son for us. There are two aspects to this parallel.

First, the Father's love for the son is described in terms that echo Gen 22.

- The word used to describe Christ as the Father's "only begotten" in John 1:14, 18; 3:16, 18; 1 John 4:9 is the common LXX translation of the word "only" used of Isaac in 22:2, 12, 16, and appears as well in Heb 11:17.
- Notably, it is not the word chosen by the LXX in 22. The description of Christ as the father's "beloved son" at the baptism (Matt 3:17) and transfiguration (Matt 17:5) is rooted in the description of Isaac as "thy son, thine only son" in 22:2, 12, 16. The LXX renders this as "thy beloved son," the only use of this expression in the Pentateuch, and, alongside Jer 38:20, in the LXX.

Second, the sacrifice of Christ for us is described in terms reminiscent of Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac, most notably John 3:16 and Rom 8:31,32, recalling 22:12,16.

At first glance, this parallel is puzzling. Abraham offers his son under constraint, to maintain his integrity, because of a command from God. He would never have thought to do such a thing on his own authority. God is absolutely sovereign. He is under no such constraint, and his offering of his son for us would seem to be a very different thing.

But is it? Recall the oath in v.16, and the interpretation of it in Heb. 6:17. By this oath, God in fact *has* put his integrity on the line. He has obligated himself to bless mankind, a sinful, rebellious race that can never in its own strength satisfy the just demands of his holiness. Satisfying that obligation requires him to make a very painful sacrifice. We can never fully understand the depth of the pain that God experienced in order to redeem us, but the history of Abraham's sacrifice, with its depth of pathos, can go some little way to helping us identify with it. In fact, the NT echoes of this episode suggest that one of God's motives in giving Abraham this command may have been to provide just such an illustration for us.