

4. This is exactly what Abraham was primed to do next when he was interrupted by the Lord:

Genesis 22:11 But the angel of the Lord called to him from heaven and said, “Abraham, Abraham!” And he said, “Here I am.”

1. The term, “angel of the Lord,” makes reference to a Theophany of Jesus Christ. God does not reveal himself and the Holy Spirit is an invisible spirit. The only possible manifestation of deity would be Jesus Christ.
2. Old Testament theophanies are concentrated in Genesis and Exodus since before the Pentateuch by Moses there was no available means of communication except through divine directives to selected recipients.
3. We see this phenomenon occurring in the garden of Eden to Adam before and following the fall, to Cain subsequent to his murder of Abel, to Noah regarding construction of the Ark, and in our current study, to Abraham in the sequential revelation of the Abrahamic Covenant.
4. There are several other examples of this in the New Testament; “No one has seen God at any time” (John 1:18a), “Not that anyone has seen the Father,” (John 6:46a), “whom no man has seen or can see,” (1 Timothy 6:16b), and “No one has seen God at any time” (1 John 4:12a).
5. A post-ascension appearance of Jesus Christ in the New Testament is referred to as a Christophany.
6. The Theophany in Genesis 22 occurs at the culmination of Abraham’s successful use of the working objects of the Abrahamic Covenant. As he unsheathes the knife to “slay his son,” the Lord intervenes with the vocatives, “Abraham, Abraham!”
7. This is the divine certification that Abraham has been vindicated by means of his application of the Word of God to his personal circumstances.
8. Definitions of vindication are:

To support or maintain as true or correct, against denial, censure, or objections; to sustain; justify; as, to *vindicate* one’s honor; to *vindicate* a claim. To serve as, or provide, justification for. Exculpate. Justification against denial or censure.⁹

⁹ Webster’s New Collegiate Dictionary, 2d ed., (Springfield: G. & C. Merriam Co., Publishers, 1953), s.vv. “vindicate,” “vindication.”



9. The challenge that the Lord placed on Abraham was carried out in a 45-year program to determine if Abraham would develop personal integrity or not. Would Abraham orient and adjust to divine guidance, divine leadership, divine promises, and divine logistics?
10. How Abraham responded would determine whether he would qualify to become the patriarch of a new race of people that would ultimately produce the Jewish Messiah.
11. If he grew in grace, developed virtue in his soul, and submitted to divine guidance, then he would be vindicated before the Supreme Court of Heaven and thus justified: “to confirm by evidence; to corroborate, prove, verify.”¹⁰
12. Abraham was justified by faith in the working object of Messiah in Genesis 15:6. He was justified by works over the course of 45 years culminating in his willingness to sacrifice Isaac as a burnt offering on Mount Moriah in Genesis 22:1ff.
13. His doctrinal rationale was based on his confidence in the five paragraphs of the Abrahamic Covenant. He was confident that if he completed the objective, then God would be able to “raise him even from the dead” (Hebrews 11:19).
14. Although primed to slit Isaac’s neck, when the Lord shouted those two vocatives it caused Abraham pause as the Lord continued His directives:

Genesis 22:12 He said, “Do not stretch out your hand against the lad, and do nothing to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me.” (NASB)

1. The verb “stretch out” in the Qal imperfect of **שָׁלַח** (*shalach*) plus the negative adverb **לֹא** (*lo*): “do not.” It refers to the act of putting out one’s hand, but with the negative *lo*, it is a command, “do not stretch out.”
2. The Lord then continues with the phrase, “do not do,” another Qal imperfect, this time the verb, **עָשָׂה** (*‘asah*): “do not do” followed by the pronoun, **מְאֻמָּה** (*me’umah*): “anything.”
3. The imperfect tenses become an order, “Continue to not stretch out your hand against the lad and continue not doing anything to him.”
4. The verb *‘asah* refers to the process of doing something, e.g., committing an act. But the negative adverb, *lo*, reverses the process by putting a stop to that action.

¹⁰ The Oxford English Dictionary (1971), s.v. “justify.”



5. It amounts to the command, “Stop right there; do not go further.” The Lord then issues a summary statement that enabled James to write, “Was not Abraham, our father, justified or vindicated by works when he offered up Isaac, his son, on the altar” (James 2:21)?
6. The key word in James 2:21 is the aorist active participle of ἀναφέρω (*anaphérō*). The prefix ἀνα (*ana*) is a preposition that denotes “up or upward.” The verb φέρω (*phérō*) means, “to bring, carry, or bear up.” The compound, *anaphérō*, means that Abraham physically lifted up his son, Isaac, and carried him to the altar as an offering to the Lord.
7. What the Lord said in Genesis 22:12 begins with the phrase, “Now I know.” The word “now” is the adverb, עַתָּה (*‘attah*). In context, it refers to a set of circumstances that has led to the current situation.¹¹
8. Because of the divine attribute of omniscience, God knew in eternity past that Abraham would grow in grace whose advance would culminate in his positive volition regarding the sacrifice of Isaac.
9. The verb “to know: is יָדָע (*yatha*). In this context, Abraham has carried out the mandate issued in Genesis 22:2. It was designed to determine if he would follow to the letter the Lord’s directives. By doing so, the Lord’s evaluation is approval by “discernment” of Abraham’s works.
10. God, therefore, knew the outcome of this entire fifty-year experiment. However, Abraham did not have that knowledge. But he did have the mindset necessary, the stick-to-itiveness to keep plugging away until he was able to put all the pieces together to arrive at spiritual maturity.
11. Spiritual maturity is the point in a believer’s life when he submits to the integrity of God. He realizes that God is perfect, His Word is absolute truth, and it can be trusted to his advantage whenever it is applied.
12. God discerned that Abraham would get to that point, but Abraham had to go through the process of experiencing successes and failures until he completely trusted the plan of God.
13. The Lord’s phrase, “Now I discern,” is divine confirmation of Abraham’s successful advance based on his unwavering belief in the five paragraphs of the Abrahamic Covenant.
14. No unbeliever can accomplish the objective of placing his total trust in biblical promises from an invisible God. An unbeliever’s trust is placed in either (1) rationalism, knowledge obtained through human reason, or (2) empiricism, knowledge obtained through experience.

¹¹ Baker and Carpenter, “עַתָּה,” 883.



15. As a believer, Abraham made the spiritual advance, confirming to the Lord that he was ready to carry out the divine objective, namely, to introduce into human history a man, and a woman, who would be the prototype of a new race of Homo sapiens called the Jew.
16. This genetic line would produce the chart pedigree of the Jewish Messiah, a two-thousand year bloodline that would be the prime target in Lucifer's strategy to prevent the Savior from entering human history.
17. So, when Abraham unsheathed the knife, it confirmed to the Lord that the experiment had been successfully completed and the divine plan for a Savior could commence.
18. What Abraham's act confirmed to the Lord is stated in the phrase "you fear God." The word "fear" is translated like a verb but it is actually the adjective יָרֵא (*yare'*). The word usually does mean "fear," but in this context, it "is an Old Testament expression meaning *reverential trust*."¹²
19. "Trust" means to rely on another's integrity, veracity, and justice, therefore Abraham had absolute confidence that the Abrahamic Covenant was backed by the integrity of God.
20. The Lord confirms that Abraham had utilized his Law of Freedom to trust in the veracity of the Lord's promises to him over the course of fifty years, demonstrated by the works he was performing on Mount Moriah.
21. The primary "work" Abraham performed was lifting up and placing Isaac on the splintered wood atop the altar followed by unsheathing his knife.
22. The key phrase in Abraham's "works" leading to the Lord's intervention is, "you have not withheld," the Qal perfect of the verb חָשַׁק (*chasak*). The perfect tense indicates Abraham was in the act of slitting Isaac's neck.
23. And get this: the Lord intervened because Abraham was not withholding Isaac "from Me." The Lord had stipulated in Genesis 22:2 the following:

Genesis 22:2 With your son, your only
legitimately born son, whom you have always loved,
namely, Isaac, promptly go to the land of Moriah
where Jehovah will provide, and sacrifice him there
as a burnt offering on one of the mountains I will
indicate to you. (EXT)
24. When Abraham heard that order, what do we find he did in the next verse?

¹² *The Scofield Reference Bible: NASB*, ed. C. I. Scofield (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 750n19:9.