

NOW I KNOW...

An early draft of Genesis ch22

Genesis 22.12:

“Do not lay a hand on the boy,” the angel of the LORD said, “Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son.”

Abraham sat and thought for awhile. Then he looked up, and said, “LORD, are you saying that you didn’t know beforehand whether I would act in faith or not?”

And the LORD replied, “That’s right, I didn’t know before, but I know now. I couldn’t be absolutely sure until you actually did it.”

Abraham sat a while longer in thought. “Then if you didn’t know what I was going to do today, how do you know you’ll be able to keep your promise to me in several hundred years time?”

“Ah, that’s a good question. Of course I don’t, not absolutely. I’ll do my best — I swear by myself, and all that. But it depends in the end on hundreds of people making the right choices, as you have today. Because you have done this, and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will surely...”

“That doesn’t sound a very reliable promise to me.”

“Well, now I come to think of it, I suppose it isn’t really. Sorry.”

Abraham contemplated the ground a little longer in silence. Then he slowly picked up his ancient and weary body, saddled up his donkey, and started out on the long journey back to Ur of the Chaldees.

Behind him, a ram caught in a thicket bleated forlornly.

Jon Garvey, 25.1.1997