

The Birth of the Promised Son

Genesis 21:1-34

- I. THE FULFILLMENT OF THE PROMISE (Genesis 21:1-8)
 - A. Sarah Bore a Son (Genesis 21:1-2)
 1. According to word the Lord had spoken (Genesis 21:1; Genesis 17:19)
 2. According to the set time spoken by the Lord (Genesis 21:2; Genesis 18:10)
 - B. The Faithfulness Encompassing the Promise (Genesis 21:3-5)
 1. Abraham's faithfulness in naming his son (Genesis 21:3; Genesis 17:19).
 2. Abraham's faithfulness in circumcising his son (Genesis 21:4; Genesis 17:10, 12-13).
 3. God's faithfulness in fulfilling His promise (Genesis 21:5; Genesis 17:17-21).
 - C. The Rejoicing in the Blessing of Isaac (Genesis 21:6-8)
 1. The pleasure from God—Issac's name means laughter (Genesis 21:6; Genesis 17:17; Genesis 18:12).
 - a. This is a play on the word for Isaac.
 - b. The birth of Isaac brought great rejoicing to the heart of Sarah.
 2. The power of God (Genesis 21:6-7)
 - a. Sarah's joy in giving birth to Isaac in her old age (Genesis 21:7).
 - b. This birth was a miraculous work from God. It showed His power in the lives of Abraham and Sarah.
 - (1) Three times you see the problem of age reported in the birth of Isaac (Genesis 21:2—"old age;" Genesis 21:5—"hundred years old;" Genesis 21:7—"old age")
 - (2) The example of Elisabeth (Luke 1:5-25, 57-80)
 - (3) The example of Mary (Luke 1:26-56)
 3. The proclamation for God (Genesis 21:7)
 - a. Sarah's life is now a witness of God's power.
 - b. She has now experienced God's faithfulness in her own life.
 - (1) Israel's experience of the faithfulness of God (Deuteronomy 4:30-34; Deuteronomy 7:9).
 - (2) His counsels are faithful and true (Isaiah 25:1), His counsels shall stand (Isaiah 46:10) and the counsel of the heathen comes to nought before Him (Psalm 33:10-11).

- (3) The Psalmist proclaimed the faithfulness of God (Psalm 89:8).
4. The celebration for the son (Genesis 21:8)
 - a. A feast is held for Isaac on the day he was weaned.
 - b. The cause of the celebration
 - (1) The birth of Isaac was followed by a healthy development of the child—certainly a cause for celebration.
 - (2) Remember this is a time that (up until the last 100 to 150 years) many young children did not make it past their 2nd or 3rd birthday.
 - c. The character of the celebration
 - (1) It was a great feast—the greatness of it shows the importance and honour that Abraham placed on such an event.
 - (2) This child had been given to him and Sarah by God (Psalm 127:3), as such the event deserved much celebration.
 - (3) When God blesses us, we need to be sure to give Him the thanks He deserves.

II. THE TROUBLE FOR ABRAHAM (Genesis 21:9-21)

- A. The Mocking of Isaac by Ishmael (Genesis 21:9-11; cp. Genesis 16:4)
 1. Sarah witnessed Ishmael mocking (Genesis 21:9)
 - a. Sarah's observance of Ishmael mocking Isaac is not surprising.
 - b. As the mother, she would be the most attentive to her son's well-being.
 - c. Further, with the hostility and jealousy between the two women, it would cause Sarah to be that much more observant of her son's treatment by Ishmael.
 2. Sarah's request concerning the mocking (Genesis 21:10)
 - a. The mocking was apparently severe (Galatians 4:29)
 - b. The mocking was apparently cruel (Galatians 4:29), Paul referred to as "persecuted."
 - c. The mocking was answered with the request of being "cast out."
 - (1) This reaction to the mocking leads us to believe that it wasn't a small matter.
 - (2) The reaction to the mocking emphasizes the severity of the meanness.
 3. The grief produced from the mocking (Genesis 21:11)
 - a. It was very grievous to Abraham
 - b. Ishmael was still Abraham's son, and this separation was a not an easy time for Abraham. Note: Sin creates painful times for the sinner. Even after the forgiveness, there will still be scars and memories to live with.

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- B. Abraham commanded to Listen to Sarah (Genesis 21:12-13; cp. Genesis 16:1-2)
1. God agreed with Sarah, Ishmael and Hagar needed to leave (Genesis 21:12a).
 2. Abraham's seed was to be in Isaac, not Ishmael (Genesis 21:12b).
 3. Yet, God would not forget his promises toward Ishmael (Genesis 21:13).
- C. The Sending Away of Hagar and Ishmael (Genesis 21:14-16)
1. The wandering in the wilderness of Beersheba (Genesis 21:14)
 - a. This is reminiscent of what we learn about the Children of Israel later.
 - b. Just as they, Hagar wanders in a wilderness, this gives us a picture of someone that has lost their way and doesn't know which way to go. The Children of Israel literally wandered around and around for 40 long years in the Wilderness (Numbers 14:33; Numbers 32:1; Deuteronomy 8:2). Just so, the sinner wanders in this life full of sin, not knowing which way to go.
 2. The waterless wilderness – there was no water (Genesis 21:15)
 - a. The water was spent in the bottle—there was no more.
 - b. Lacking water in the wilderness makes the lack even worse.
 - c. Water is life—the sinner is without the water of life (John 4:10-14).
 3. The wasteless wilderness – there was no life (Genesis 21:15-16)
 - a. The wilderness seemed desolate of anything to sustain Hagar and Ishmael's life.
 - b. Life without Christ can be a desolate wilderness.
 4. The wailing in the wilderness— *“Lift up her voice, and wept”* (Genesis 21:16).
 - a. Hagar distanced herself to not see the death of her son—about a bowshot (40-60 yards).
 - b. Hagar lifted up her voice and wept
 - c. Sin leads to sorrow. Only the grace of God can rescue someone from such a lamentable situation.
- D. God's Deliverance of Hagar and Ishmael (Genesis 21:17-21)
1. God heard the voice of the lad (Genesis 21:17)
 - a. The grace of God is now intervening to save their lives.
 - b. The regarded the lad's voice—“God heard the voice of the lad.”
 - c. God told Hagar *“Fear not”* (Genesis 21:17) – When Divine deliverance comes on the scene, fear is removed (Luke 2:10).
 2. God gave promise concerning the life of Ishmael (Genesis 21:18)
 - a. Lift up the lad, and hold him in thine hand—Deliverance requires that Hagar obey the word of God. Divine deliverance always lifts up; sin is that which casts down.

- b. “I will make him a great nation” (Genesis 17:20; Genesis 25:12-18; 1 Chronicles 1:29-31).
3. God gave perception concerning the situation (Genesis 21:19)
 - a. “*God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water*” (Genesis 21:19).
 - b. God has to open our eyes, if we are to be saved; for sin fasts closes the eyes of the lost (2 Corinthians 4:4).
4. God gave promise concerning the situation (Genesis 21:19)
 - a. Once God opened the eyes of Hagar she could see that there was water available and she was able to take of it.
 - b. Once she had the water, she was able to give it to Ishmael so that he too could live (John 4:28-30, 39-42).
5. God’s presence in the situation (Genesis 21:20-21)
 - a. God was with the lad—this was Ishmael’s greatest blessing (Genesis 21:20).
 - b. Ishmael grew and served, being in the wilderness of Paran (Genesis 21:21).
 - (1) Becoming an archer in the wilderness
 - (2) Living off the land, this insinuates that life was hard, but Ishmael must have been a hard worker.

III. THE RECONCILIATION OF TWO OPPONENTS (Genesis 21:22-34)

- A. Abimelech’s Search for a Covenant (Genesis 21:22-24)
 1. The contrast between this meeting and the previous meeting (Genesis 21:22; Genesis 20:9-16)
 - a. In the first meeting Abraham was rebuked, however, in this meeting it is Abimelech that will be rebuked.
 - b. In the first meeting Abimelech gave gifts to Abraham, but in this meeting, it is Abraham that will give gifts to Abimelech.
 - c. In the first meeting Abimelech upbraided Abraham, but in this meeting, Abimelech comes to praise Abraham.
 - d. As contrasting at these meetings were, they both ended in peace.
 2. Abimelech, along with his chief captain approached Abraham (Genesis 21:22)
 - a. To obtain an agreement
 - b. Requesting Abraham’s kindness and integrity
 3. Abimelech’s three major requests (Genesis 21:23)
 - a. The need for truth
 - (1) “*Thou wilt not deal falsely with me*” (Genesis 21:23).
 - (2) This is a reminder to Abraham of how he treated Abimelech the last time they met.

- (3) Though Abraham had not lied to Abimelech since—once a liar always a liar.
 - b. The need for terms
 - (1) *“With me...with my son...with my son’s son”* (Genesis 21:23).
 - (2) This request was for a covenant with a long-term agreement.
 - c. The need for territory
 - (1) *“Thou shalt do unto me, and to the land wherein thou hast sojourned”* (Genesis 21:23).
 - (2) The covenant would cover all the people of Abimelech’s rule where Abraham was now living.
 - (3) Abimelech wasn’t thinking about himself, he was thinking about his people as well.
 4. Abraham’s agreement with Abimelech (Genesis 21:24)
 - a. Abraham agreed
 - b. Abraham agreed to a covenant
- B. Abraham’s Reproof of Abimelech (Genesis 21:25-26)
1. The reproof over a well of water (Genesis 21:25)
 - a. Keep in mind that wells were of great value in the land.
 - b. If there was no water, the cattle, crops, as well as people would die.
 - c. Therefore, to take a well was a high crime.
 2. The manner in which the well was taken (Genesis 21:25)
 - a. By force, “had violently taken away” (Genesis 21:25).
 - b. The reproof was necessary as no peace is possible until wrongs are set right.
 - (1) Real peace is not obtainable without exposing evil and putting it in its rightful place.
 - (2) Governments have tried to end wars without dealing with the evil that caused the war. Such efforts typically prove futile.
 - c. Isaac will deal with a similar situation later (Genesis 25:13-25).
 3. Abimelech claims no knowledge of the event until now (Genesis 21:26).
 - a. Abimelech does not protest the charge.
 - b. His complaint was his no knowledge of the situation.
 - c. This implied that he would have stopped it, if he had known about it.
 - d. This simple truth reminds us to not jump to conclusions with folks, but to hear their side of the story before passing judgment.
- C. The Making of a Covenant at Beersheba (Genesis 21:27-32)
1. Abraham gave Abimelech sheep and oxen, and they made a covenant (Genesis 21:27).

2. The seven ewe lambs (Genesis 21:28-30)
 - a. Set out by themselves (Genesis 21:28)
 - b. The confusion of Abimelech (Genesis 21:29)
 - c. The seven ewe lambs were a testimony (witness) of the well that was dug (Genesis 21:28-30).
 3. The naming of the place Beersheba—*“the well of oath”* (Genesis 21:31).
 4. The establishment of the covenant (Genesis 21:32).
 - a. The importance of a covenant (oath, vow) (Ecclesiastes 5:4-6)
 - b. The ramifications in keeping/or not keeping a covenant (oath, vow) (Numbers 30:1-16).
 - (1) For a man (Number 30:2)
 - (2) For a woman (Numbers 30:3-5)
 - (3) For a wife (Numbers 30:6-8, 13)
 - (4) For the widow (Numbers 30:9-12, 13)
 - c. The example of a binding oath (the Children of Israel and the Gibeonites) (Joshua 9:3-27).
 5. Abimelech and Phichol returned to the land of the Philistines (Genesis 21:32).
- D. Abraham’s Planting of a Grove and Calling on the Lord (Genesis 21:33-34)
1. The place
 - a. The planting of the grove was in Beersheba.
 - b. This would be a place for Abraham to call on the LORD.
 2. The praise
 - a. Abraham called on the name of the LORD.
 - b. Abraham worshipped God.