

The Father of Nations:

A Study of Abraham

Lesson Nine: The specification of seed of the father of nations—*Genesis 21*

August 30, 2020

But what does the Scripture say? "CAST OUT THE BONDWOMAN AND HER SON, FOR THE SON OF THE BONDWOMAN SHALL NOT BE AN HEIR WITH THE SON OF THE FREE WOMAN."

Galatians 4:30

Opening Thought: Imagine waiting a long time for a promise to be kept. Imagine being defined by your long wait for this great act of mercy. Imagine being the lady that is supposed to have a son, the lady that acted on her own to have someone who she could call her son, all the while longing for the promise to be kept...and it finally was! How would that affect you?

I. Introduction/Review

II. The joke's on me!! (vv. 1-6)

A. The Lord kept his promise

1. Exactly as He promised.
2. Exactly when He promised.

B. They named their son "Isaac"

1. Remember what his name means.
2. Remember that his name was pre-determined for a reason.
 - a) See Genesis 17:19, 21
 - b) See Genesis 18:12-15

C. They circumcised Isaac on the eighth day.

1. This was to obey the command of the Lord (Genesis 17:11-12)

D. Key statement #1—God has made laughter for me!

1. What is Sarah saying?
2. What does this mean?
 - a) Sarah seems to own the fact that she did not think that this was possible.
 - b) Sarah seems to be laughing at herself.
 - c) The question is—how will she react when someone actually DOES laugh at her.

III. Get that kid out of here! (vv. 8-13)

A. Isaac is installed as the heir (v. 8)

1. This was done when Isaac was weaned.
2. This was done by means of a great feast.
 - a) How do you think this made Hagar and Ishmael feel?

B. Isaac (and Sarah) were laughed at!

1. Notice in v. 9 that we find this:
 - a) The son of Hagar—notice he is not named. Isn't that a little odd?
 - b) We are reminded that Hagar bore him to Abraham. This repetition is for dramatic effect. We will see something similar in chapter 22.
 - c) We are told that Ishmael was "mocking".
 - (1) The word for "mocking" here is (לִּצְחָק) which means, "to laugh".
 - (2) This word should sound familiar to us, because it is the Hebrew word that forms the base of Isaac's name. Remember, his name means "he laughs."

- (3) The ESV is the only translation that renders (לֵצַח) as “laughing.” I would argue that this is the best translation of this phrase.
2. Here’s the question:
 - a) If Sarah knew that Isaac’s name meant that Isaac’s name means “he will laugh,” and she recognized that God would make her a point of laughter, then why did she react so strongly?
3. How did she react? (v. 10)
 - a) She wanted Hagar and Ishmael gone!
 - (1) Why? Because there can be no rivals to the true heir.
 - (2) Why? Because there were obvious roots of jealousy that had taken hold.
 - (3) Why? Because now that Isaac was born, Sarah did not want to be reminded of her lack of faith.
 - (a) Remember what “Ishmael” means! God hears! His name is a rebuke to Abraham and Sarah.
4. How did Abraham react? (v. 11)
 - a) He was sad because he loved his son.
 - b) We can assume that he was resisting what Sarah wanted because of v. 12.
5. What did God say? (vv. 12-13)
 - a) Don’t be distressed—Why not? Because Ishmael will be blessed.
 - b) Do what Sarah is telling you—Why? Because through Isaac will come your special descendants.
6. What did Abraham do? (v. 14a)
 - a) He got up early—this will be important again in our next session.
 - b) He provided Hagar and Ishmael with a somewhat meagre portion of food.
 - c) He put the boy under her care.
 - d) He sent her away.

IV. God has heard him from where he is! (vv. 14b-21)

A. Don’t let me see the boy die (vv. 14-16)

1. The meagre rations allotted to Hagar and Ishmael ran out.
2. Hagar left Ishmael under a bush (in the shade), about a bowshot away, to die out of her sight.
 - a) Why tell us that he was a bowshot away? Probably as a prefigure to Ishmael becoming a great archer. I can’t imagine that Hagar had a bow and used it to mark the distance.
3. Hagar lifted up her voice in absolute (and understandable) despondency.

B. Don’t fear, for God will hear (vv. 17-21)

1. Notice in v. 17:
 - a) That it says that God heard the boy crying. Why is this noteworthy? Remember Ishmael’s name!
 - b) That it refers to God hearing twice. This repetition is on purpose. God hears!
2. Notice how God provides for Hagar and Ishmael:
 - a) He opens her eyes. There was a well right in front of her.
 - b) Hagar fills the water skins. God provides for her and for Ishmael.

V. What do we learn from this?

A. God is faithful, even though Abraham and Sarah haven’t always been.

1. God is faithful to Abraham and Sarah.
2. God is faithful to Hagar and Ishmael.
3. God is faithful to us.

B. Just as there is only room for one heir, there is only room for one Lord in our life.

1. Compare Galatians 4:21-31 for an allegorical link between this passage and the gospel.