

GENESIS 21: THE BIRTH OF ISAAC

I. OVERVIEW

- A. Sarah conceived and gives birth to a son
 - i. Names him Isaac
- B. Abraham made a feast on the day Isaac was weaned
 - i. Sarah saw Ishmael laughing at Isaac
 - a. She tells Abraham to send Hagar and Ishmael away
 - ii. God told Abraham to do what Sarah told him
 - a. Promises to make Ishmael a nation as well
 - b. So Abraham sent them away with bread and water
 - i. They wander in the wilderness of Beersheba
- C. Hagar and Ishmael ran out of water and think they are going to die
 - i. Angel of God called out from heaven
 - a. God has heard you
 - b. Get up
 - c. Get the boy up
 - d. Hold him with your hand
 - e. I will make him into a great nation
 - ii. Hagar saw a well of water
- D. Ishmael grew up in the wilderness of Paran
 - i. Took a wife from Egypt
- E. Abimelech asks Abraham to swear he will not deal falsely
 - i. With him
 - ii. Or his descendants
 - iii. Or his posterity
 - iv. But to deal kindly with him
- F. There was a dispute between Abraham and Abimelech's servants over a well
 - i. Abraham made a covenant with Abimelech
 - a. Gave him seven ewe lambs as witness that it was Abraham's well
- G. Abimelech returned to the land of the Philistines
- H. Abraham stayed in Beersheba and called on the name of the Lord

II. AS HE HAD SAID – V. 1

- A. Total of 25 years after the original promise
- B. Reiterated two more times
 - i. As he had promised – v. 1
 - ii. At the time of which God had spoken to him – v. 2
- C. Repeated three times to show God has proven faithful to His promise
 - i. Three is number of testing
 - ii. Abraham's faith was tested

III. ISAAC – V. 3

- A. Means *he laughs*
 - i. Abraham laughed – Genesis 17:17
 - ii. Sarah laughed – Genesis 18:12
 - iii. God has made laughter for me – v. 6
 - a. God has finally brought her the joy of bearing a son
 - iv. Everyone who hears will laugh over me – v. 6
 - a. Everyone will share in her joy
 - v. Ishmael laughs – v. 9
 - a. Mocking Sarah or Isaac

IV. A HUNDRED YEARS OLD – V. 5

- A. The number 100 signifies fullness¹
 - i. Isaiah 65:20 ***No more shall there be in it an infant who lives but a few days, or an old man who does not fill out his days, for the young man shall die a hundred years old, and the sinner a hundred years old shall be accursed.***
 - ii. Matthew 19:29 ***“And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands, for my name's sake, will receive a hundredfold and will inherit eternal life.”***
 - iii. Luke 8:8 ***“And some fell into good soil and grew and yielded a hundredfold.”***
- B. Isaac was born in the fullness of Abraham's life
 - i. In the fullness of time

V. LAUGHING – V. 9

¹ Swedenborg, E. (2002, February). *Spiritual Meaning of Hundred*. Bible Meanings.
<http://www.biblemeanings.info/Words/Number/Hundred.htm>

- A. Same word as Isaac's name
 - i. Some translations say "mocking"
 - ii. Others say "playing"
 - a. As in, Ishmael was just having fun with his little brother
 - b. This makes it more difficult to accept Sarah's actions
 - i. Could be the reason for the difference in translations²

VI. CAST OUT THIS SLAVE WOMAN – V. 10

- A. In chapter 16 Hagar fled
- B. The son of the slave cannot coexist with the son of the free
 - i. Can't have bondage and freedom at the same time³

VII. GOD SAID TO ABRAHAM – V. 12

- A. Abraham sought the Lord
 - i. Unlike last time when he gave in to Sarah

VIII. BE NOT DISPLEASED – V. 12

- A. Abraham didn't want to send Ishmael away
 - i. But it was required for Isaac to fully receive the blessing of being Abraham's heir
- B. Luke 14:26 ***"If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple."***
 - i. This doesn't mean we should all send away our siblings when they aggravate us
 - ii. But our love for God and His purposes must be supreme

IX. THROUGH ISAAC SHALL YOUR OFFSPRING BE NAMED – V. 12

- A. God confirmed Isaac is the one who would bear the seed line
 - i. Even though he was not the firstborn
 - ii. Continues theme of the firstborn not receiving the inheritance

X. PARALLELS BETWEEN HAGAR AND THE EXODUS

- A. Egyptian slave sent away by Hebrew masters
- B. She wanders in the wilderness
- C. The firstborn is about to die
 - i. Because there is a lack of water in the wilderness

² Speiser, E. A. (1964). Birth of Isaac And Expulsion of Hagar. In *The Anchor Bible: Genesis* (p. 155). essay, Doubleday & Company.

³ Guzik, D. (2018c). *Study Guide for Genesis 21*. Blue Letter Bible. https://www.blueletterbible.org/comm/guzik_david/study-guide/genesis/genesis-21.cfm

- D. Hagar lifted up her voice and wept
 - i. Exodus 2:23 ***During those many days the king of Egypt died, and the people of Israel groaned because of their slavery and cried out for help. Their cry for rescue from slavery came up to God.***
- E. God heard their cries
 - i. Exodus 2:24 ***And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob.***
- F. God provided water in the wilderness

XI. BREAD AND WATER – V. 14

- A. Abraham had great wealth but this is all he gave Hagar
 - i. She and her son will not receive any of the inheritance⁴

XII. HER SHOULDER – V. 14

- A. Hagar must bear her own burdens now⁵

XIII. ANGEL OF GOD – V. 17

- A. God heard the boy
 - i. But the angel of God called out to Hagar
 - a. Distinct from God
 - b. But speaks as God
 - i. “I will make him into a great nation”
 - c. Evidence of pre-incarnate Christ

XIV. I WILL MAKE HIM INTO A GREAT NATION – V. 18

- A. God was not against Ishmael⁶
 - i. Even though he wasn’t the son of promise

XV. ABIMELECH – V. 22

- A. May or may not be the same Abimelech as previous chapter
 - i. Abimelech is a title

XVI. DEAL FALSELY – V. 23

- A. Abraham previously had dealt falsely in chapter 20

⁴ Armstrong, S. (2012c, January 23). *Genesis 2011 - Lesson 21A*. Verse By Verse Ministry International.
https://versebyverseministry.org/lessons/genesis_2011_lesson_21a

⁵ Armstrong

⁶ Guzik

- i. Maybe there is a new Abimelech who saw what Abraham did to the previous Abimelech
 - a. Wants to get assurance Abraham will not do the same to him

XVII. SEIZED – V. 25

- A. Abraham previously owned this well
 - i. But Abimelech's servants took it from him
 - a. If Abraham must not deal falsely with Abimelech, then Abimelech must not deal falsely with Abraham

XVIII. SHEEP AND OXEN – V. 27

- A. Used to make the covenant

XIX. SEVEN EWE LAMBS – V. 28

- A. Probably as compensation to Abimelech for his loss of the well
 - i. Abraham rightly owned the well but was not a greedy man⁷
- B. Or as admission of guilt on Abimelech's part
 - i. He is acknowledging guilt by accepting the lambs⁸

XX. BEERSHEBA – V. 32

- A. Small but important city
 - i. Both Isaac and Jacob spoke with God there
 - a. Genesis 26:23-24 ***From there he went up to Beersheba. And the Lord appeared to him the same night and said, "I am the God of Abraham your father. Fear not, for I am with you and will multiply your offspring for my servant Abraham's sake."***
 - b. Genesis 46:1-4 ***So Israel took his journey with all that he had and came to Beersheba, and offered sacrifices to the God of his father Isaac. And God spoke to Israel in visions of the night and said, "Jacob, Jacob." And he said, "Here I am." Then he said, "I am God, the God of your father. Do not be afraid to go down to Egypt, for there I will make you a great nation. I myself will go down with you to Egypt, and I will also bring you up again, and Joseph's hand shall close your eyes."***
 - ii. It was the southern border of Judah

⁷ Guzik

⁸ Armstrong, S. (2012d, January 29). *Genesis 2011 - Lesson 21B*. Verse By Verse Ministry International.
https://versebyverseministry.org/lessons/genesis_2011_lesson_21b

- a. Judges 20:1 ***Then all the people of Israel came out, from Dan to Beersheba, including the land of Gilead, and the congregation assembled as one man to the Lord at Mizpah.***
- iii. Main administrative city in the Negev
 - a. Only major city there⁹

XXI. POINTS TO JESUS

- A. Isaac is a picture of Jesus in several ways:¹⁰ (Guzik)
 - i. Both sons were promised by God
 - ii. Both were a result of miraculous conceptions
 - iii. Both were born after a period of delay
 - iv. Both mothers were given assurance based on God's omnipotence
 - a. Genesis 18:13-14 ***The Lord said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh and say, 'Shall I indeed bear a child, now that I am old?' Is anything too hard for the Lord? At the appointed time I will return to you, about this time next year, and Sarah shall have a son."***
 - b. Luke 1:34-37 ***And Mary said to the angel, "How will this be, since I am a virgin?" And the angel answered her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy – the Son of God. And behold, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. For nothing will be impossible with God."***
 - v. Both were named before they were born
 - vi. Both were born at the appointed time
 - a. Genesis 21:2 ***And Sarah conceived and bore Abraham a son in his old age at the time of which God had spoken to him.***
 - b. Galatians 4:4 ***But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law...***
 - vii. Both births were accompanied by great joy

⁹ Steinmeyer, N. (2022, February 14). *Tel Be'er Sheva, City of the Patriarchs*. Biblical Archaeology Society.
<https://www.biblicalarchaeology.org/daily/biblical-sites-places/tel-beer-sheva-city-of-the-patriarchs/>

¹⁰ Guzik

- a. Genesis 21:6 **And Sarah said, “God has made laughter for me; everyone who hears will laugh over me.”**
 - b. Luke 1:46-47 **And Mary said, “My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior...”**
 - c. Luke 2:10-11 **And the angel said to them, “Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.”**
- B. Angel of God spoke to Hagar
- i. Possibly pre-incarnate Jesus
 - a. John 1:18 **No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father’s side, he has made him known.**

XXII. QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

- A. Why did God wait 25 years to give Abraham and Sarah their promised son?
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- B. Have you been waiting for a long time for anything that God has promised you? How have you dealt with that? What can you learn from Abraham and Sarah’s journey?
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- C. Why do you think God told Abraham to listen to Sarah and do what she said?
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- D. How far are you willing to go to make Jesus the supreme authority and love in your life? Have you ever needed to cut friends out of your life to remove the temptation to slip into worldly living?
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- E. Why did God wait until Hagar and Ishmael were nearly dead before He rescued them?

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- F. What lesson can we learn from Abraham and Abimelech about how to approach someone who has wronged us?

XXIII. FURTHER STUDY

- A. How does the fulfilled promise to Sarah foreshadow Israel's future glory? See Isaiah 54 and Galatians 4:26-27.

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- B. What lesson does Paul say we should learn from the conflict between Ishmael and Isaac in Galatians 4:22-29?

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- C. What is required to be considered offspring of Abraham? See Romans 9:6-9.
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- D. What does God's concern for Hagar and the non-chosen son Ishmael reveal about God?
See Psalm 68:5-6.

- E. Why is the story of the birth of Isaac placed between these two encounters with Abimelech?
