

Pentwater Bible Church

*Covenant at Beersheba & The Akedah
Genesis Message Forty-Nine
Genesis 21: 22 to 22: 14*



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Review:

THE PROMISE CHILD IS BORN

God visited Sarah with a child at the set time (Genesis 17: 21). He had said before He would give her a child and now the promise was to be fulfilled. The child would come at the exact time the Lord had prophesied. Just as the Lord Jesus came at His first advent at the appointed time. He will return again too at the appointed time to remove His children from this earth and sometime later commence the Tribulation. This will be followed by a thousand year Millennial Kingdom with Christ ruling the government on His shoulders (Isaiah 9: 7). Finally Sarah was able to believe God's promises as she saw them fulfilled. Her faith had matured to the point that she believed and had confidence in the Word of God. As New Testament saints we are saved by grace through faith. We genuinely believe God's Word because we know it is true and He is faithful. God whom had opened the wombs of the women of Abimelech now opened the womb of Sarah. He promised and He is capable. Interestingly God said or God had spoken is stated three times in these verses which emphasizes His fulfillment of His Word.

Other occasions in Scripture have been given where humans did not believe a prophecy regarding the coming of a child. Remember what did Elisha said to the Shunammite woman 'At this season, when the time cometh round, thou shalt embrace a son.' And she said to him: 'Nay, my lord, thou man of God, do not lie unto thy handmaid (II Kings 4: 16). She too did not believe Elisha God's prophet when he made this prophecy. But at the appointed time the child did arrive (II Kings 4: 17).

The promised son was born when Abraham was a hundred years old and Sarah was ninety. Her womb and ovaries had been restored to give birth as well as her breasts to nurse. Sarah's name means a princess, which signifies that many nobles would come from her. The Orthodox Jews see the word "children" as apposed to child as significant (Genesis 21: 7). They reason that she would nurse many children to prove the birth to the other princesses that came to see the boy believing rather that Sarah had brought home an abandoned child from the marketplace. The Bereshit Rabbah honoring Sarah expands on this concept.

Our mother Sarah was extremely modest. Said Abraham to her: 'This is not a time for modesty, but uncover your breasts so that all may know that the Holy One, blessed be He, has begun to perform miracles.' She uncovered her breasts and the milk gushed forth as from two fountains, and noble ladies came and had their children suckled by her, saying, 'We do not merit that our children should be suckled with the milk of that righteous woman.' The Rabbis said: Whoever came for the sake of heaven became God-fearing (Bereshit Rabbah 50: 9).

Abraham called his son Isaac which is Yitzhak יִצְחָק in Hebrew. It is the short form for יִצְחָקְאֵל. It means He (God) laughs. Do not be surprised at God finding enjoyment in giving this couple a child out of season. The laughter spoken of through the child's name is laughter of joy and not of humor. It represents a deep joy that is realized by laughing out loud at a pleasant experience. God has given this to us to share and that is exactly what Sarah did. (Genesis 21: 6). She knew the joy of which only one who has received God's special blessings can relate. This is similar to our salvation experience when the Holy Spirit enters us and takes up residence. We become "born again" as the Lord Jesus described to Nicodemus (John 3: 3). We receive the joy of knowing that we can see the Kingdom of God. We can't help telling others what has happened to us!

Abraham following God's previous command (Genesis 17: 10) circumcised Isaac on the eighth day of his life. This is the first mention of an infant being circumcised on the eighth day. The others were adults as mentioned in Genesis chapter seventeen

ISHMAEL AND HAGAR ARE DRIVEN OUT

Genesis 21: 8-21

The events of verse eight represent the circumstances that caused the expulsion of Ishmael. Isaac grew to the point of being off his mother's breast milk, which was in that culture was between the ages of two and five. So this makes Ishmael between the ages of seventeen to twenty. He was an adult. In the ancient Hebrew culture weaning was an event in ones life to be celebrated and Abraham organized a great feast on that day. This provoked Ishmael to jealousy. Scripture does not relate any such festivities for Ishmael's weaning.

Ishmael began to mock Isaac and Sarah being a protective mother took notice. She saw what Ishmael was doing and was going to take measures to make a permanent end to it. The Hebrew word for mocking is *metzachek* מִצְחָק. It is sometimes translated as making sport. It frequently appears in the Old Testament (Genesis 19: 14; 39: 14, 17; 26: 8; Exodus 32: 6; Judges 16: 25; II Samuel 2: 14). In some instances it refers to a negative action of ridicule. In a very limited occurrence (Genesis 26: 8) it refers in a positive sense of simply playing. In some passages it refers to making sport, which expresses a strong sense of ridicule coupled with idolatry and sexual immorality. Whatever the exact nature of Ishmael's attitude toward Isaac, it was clearly a highly improper attitude. This portended future even worse actions on the part of Ishmael toward Isaac. Sarah then told Abraham that he had to cast out both Hagar and Ishmael. Her references to them are indicative of her attitude toward them. She calls Hagar the *handmaid* and Ishmael *her son*. It is clearly meant to demean them both by making reference to Hagar's lowly societal status as a slave. She did not want to give any credence to the fact that she offered Hagar originally to bring a son to Abraham. The deeper reason for these events is that God caused Sarah to respond in this manner. He was not going to allow any harm to come to the covenant heir of the covenant He made with Abraham. Clearly Ishmael was not the heir and Sarah reiterated this to Abraham. The Jewish nation was going to flourish and become as the stars of heaven and the sand

of the seashore (Genesis 22: 17). God's Covenant with Abraham was going to be carried out.

Abraham loved Ishmael and was grieved at the edict Sarah gave him. Even though it was warranted it hurt him deeply to have to cast both Ishmael and Hagar out of the family compound. However, God came to him for the *seventh* time to explain that He had a plan for Ishmael and to comfort Abraham. God reaffirmed His control over the entire situation and that it was He who spoke through Sarah by affirming what she said to Abraham (*In all that Sarah saith unto thee, hearken unto her voice*) he must do. This is the only time in the Bible that a husband is told by God to harken or to obey his wife. *The reason is because in Isaac shall they seed be called.* Meaning Isaac was the seed of the inheritance of the Covenant that God made with Abraham. God said that He would bless Ishmael (*make a nation of him*), which became the Arab nation. Ishmael was still from Abraham's seed so God made a provision for him through the Abrahamic Covenant by blessing him (Genesis 12: 2-3).

Now we turn to the actual expelling of Ishmael and his mother. Remember that Ishmael is in his late teens or twenty years old. Abraham did five things toward this end as God had commanded.

1. He rose up early in the morning. (He made his decision to obey God)
2. He took bread and a bottle of water. (Indicative of the meager inheritance)
3. He gave it to Hagar by putting it on her shoulder
4. He gave her the child (Ishmael was now under Hagar's authority)
5. He sent her away (this makes the expelling official)

Sarah's attitude was a hostile one toward Hagar and Ishmael. She used the Hebrew word *garash* גָּרַשׁ, which has a harsh and hostile connotation toward the expelling. The word used for God's expelling is *shalach* שָׁלַח, which is neutral as its worst and usually has the connotation of a friendly release. The subtleties of the Hebrew language allow us to see God's motive and actions as opposed to those of mankind. God uses the same word in expelling Adam and Eve from Eden. This gives us some degree of insight to amount of love God has for us and even in the most heinous infractions of His commands He treats us in an undeserved loving manner.

Hagar wandered in the desert (wilderness) in that she was lost. They ran out of water. She being the dutiful mother placed Ishmael under a tree. She was afraid for him and did not want to be near to see him perish. She was so distraught that she wept out loud at the imminent death of Ishmael. Next we see the "Angel of Jehovah" appearing to her. We know from this context that is the second person of the Holy Trinity our Lord Jesus Christ.

He calls to her from Heaven and asks a rhetorical question "*What ails you Hagar?*" He then tells her that God has heard the voice of the lad where he is. Christ begins to comfort her by telling her that he will survive. He tells her to lift him up and hold him in your hand. He tells them that he will make a great nation of him, which is the Arab nation. In order to do that Ishmael must survive and so God opens her eyes to see a well. She then is able to get some water for Ishmael and herself.

God continued to walk with Ishmael. The text tells us that *he grew and he dwelled in the wilderness*, which sets the stage for his future desert wanderings. God then reaffirms

Ismael's occupation as an archer opens the door for his aggression. He became a hunter before the Lord. This status is the same negative activity as Nimrod. He too was a hunter before (against) the Lord. He dwelled in the area between the Negev and the Sinai in Paran.

This section of scripture closes with Hagar choosing a wife for Ishmael from the country of her origin Egypt. The ancient Egyptians were of the tribe of Ham while the Jews came from Shem. This added to the antagonism that was there between Isaac and Ishmael.

Paul uses this story to teach the spiritual lesson of Law and Grace in Galatians 4: 21-31. He tells us that Grace cannot coexist with the Law as methods of salvation.

Today's Message:

THE COVENANT AT BEERSHEBA

Genesis 21: 22-34

22 And it came to pass at that time, that Abimelech and Phicol the captain of his host spake unto Abraham, saying, God is with thee in all that thou doest. 23 Now therefore swear unto me here by God that thou wilt not deal falsely with me, nor with my son, nor with my son's son. But according to the kindness that I have done unto thee, thou shalt do unto me, and to the land wherein thou hast sojourned. 24 And Abraham said, I will swear. 25 And Abraham reproveth Abimelech because of the well of water, which Abimelech's servants had violently taken away. 26 And Abimelech said, I know not who hath done this thing. Neither didst thou tell me, neither yet heard I of it, but to-day. 27 And Abraham took sheep and oxen, and gave them unto Abimelech. And they two made a covenant. 28 And Abraham set seven ewe lambs of the flock by themselves. 29 And Abimelech said unto Abraham, What mean these seven ewe lambs which thou hast set by themselves? 30 And he said, These seven ewe lambs shalt thou take of my hand, that it may be a witness unto me, that I have digged this well. 31 Wherefore he called that place Beer-sheba. Because there they sware both of them. 32 So they made a covenant at Beer-sheba. And Abimelech rose up, and Phicol the captain of his host, and they returned into the land of the Philistines. 33 And Abraham planted a tamarisk tree in Beer-sheba, and called there on the name of Jehovah, the Everlasting God. 34 And Abraham sojourned in the land of the Philistines many days (ASV 1901).

Abimelech had been healed as an answer to prayer of Abraham. He was militarily and politically superior to Abraham. Nevertheless he now acknowledges that God is with Abraham. Due to the fact that he brought his general Phicol with him it is clear he was pursuing a non-aggression pact. He realized that Abraham had the God of the universe supporting him and he wanted to avoid any conflict with Abraham. God was with him even though he had been deceptive with Abimelech. Therefore he was most unsure of

him and what he might do to potentially harm him. The entire mid-east region was aware of Abraham's blessings. They saw how God had materially blessed him. Abraham survived the cataclysm at Sodom and Gomorrah. He prevailed in the battle with the kings and rescued Lot and his family as well as having a child at the age of one hundred with his wife being ninety. Abimelech realizing Abraham's blessing and protection asked for a covenant (non-aggression pact).

The covenant was made allowed Abraham to settle in the land in peace and Abimelech to share in the blessing that Abraham had received. He was in Hebron for twenty-five years but he remained in Beersheba for twenty-six years. Abimelech wanted to protect himself, his sons and his grandsons via this treaty. People are generally sensitive to their children and grandchildren's welfare. Beyond that they do not have that same degree of paternal love. When Moses led the Israelites into the Promised Land he did not go the way of the Philistines because of this treaty (Exodus 13: 17). The treaty had expired and there would be war. The Israelites were too timid to sustain themselves in a war. The Lord said that they would want to retreat to Egypt. He did not want them going back there. There would be times during the journey to the Promise Land that they thought going back to Egypt was preferred to the Exodus (Numbers 14: 2). The treaty was over after the third generation. It was seven from Abraham to the Exodus.

1. Abraham
2. Isaac
3. Jacob
4. Levi (one of Jacob's 12 sons)
5. Kohath
6. Amram
7. Moses

Interestingly Abraham agrees to the treaty but he raises a complaint of his own. While Abimelech might be wary of Abraham, Abraham too wanted to raise a concern for his future security in this treaty. Abraham had a well in a nearby community to Abimelech's, which Abimelech's servants had violently (Genesis 21: 25) taken from him. Abimelech said he had no knowledge of this and was just learning of it during this conversation with Abraham. They both agreed to this three-generation treaty and sealed it with reciprocal gifts. Abraham gave sheep and oxen and then he followed additionally with seven ewe lambs. Abimelech didn't understand the seven ewe lambs and asked why. Abraham wanted his well included in this treaty and gave the ewe lambs exclusively to represent his ownership of the well and Abimelech's acknowledgment of that. So the covenant was one of *peace* for three generations but *justice* for Abraham having the security of his well free from Abimelech's servant's robbery. Therefore the name of the location of the well was called Beer-sheba. This Hebrew word is made up of two words well and seven. **בְּבֵאֵר שֶׁבַע** So the word actually means the *well of seven*. The name Philistines is applied proleptically (anticipatorily) to the territory when that group actually came later in the twelfth century B.C.

The results of the covenant are that Abraham planted a tamarisk tree, which signified his long tenure there, which would be twenty-six years. He then began public worship by calling on the name of the Lord by calling Him Jehovah the Everlasting God.

In Hebrew this is El Olam. It means the concealed or hidden and an undetermined amount of time (eternal).

THE AKEIDAH

Genesis 22: 1-14

1 And it came to pass after these things, that God did prove Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham. And he said, Here am I. 2 And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son, whom thou lovest, even Isaac, and get thee into the land of Moriah. And offer him there for a burnt-offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of. 3 And Abraham rose early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son. And he clave the wood for the burnt-offering, and rose up, and went unto the place of which God had told him. 4 On the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes, and saw the place afar off. 5 And Abraham said unto his young men, Abide ye here with the ass, and I and the lad will go yonder; and we will worship, and come again to you. 6 And Abraham took the wood of the burnt-offering, and laid it upon Isaac his son. And he took in his hand the fire and the knife. And they went both of them together. 7 And Isaac spake unto Abraham his father, and said, My father. And he said, Here am I, my son. And he said, Behold, the fire and the wood. But where is the lamb for a burnt-offering? 8 And Abraham said, God will provide himself the lamb for a burnt-offering, my son. So they went both of them together. 9 And they came to the place which God had told him of. And Abraham built the altar there, and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar, upon the wood. 10 And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son. 11 And the angel of Jehovah called unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham. And he said, Here I am. 12 And he said, Lay not thy hand upon the lad, neither do thou anything unto him. For now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, from me. 13 And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold, behind him a ram caught in the thicket by his horns. And Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt-offering in the stead of his son. 14 And Abraham called the name of that place Jehovah-Jireh. As it is said to this day, In the mount of Jehovah it shall be provided (ASV 1901).

After these events means it covers a gap of about twenty to thirty years since Isaac's birth. Josephus said he was twenty-five. He was not a young boy. This is a mature man. God was going to put Abraham to a severe test that defies our logic and reason. It is also not a test He will bring upon a believer today since Christ paid the sacrifice for us and none other need be made. Our trust is in God and we can see what He has done for us through the truth of scripture. This story is one of the situations that have been of benefit to us.

This test given by God to Abraham was a test of his faith. God knew what he would do and what the outcome would be. It is Abraham that had to realize the

outworking of his own faith and trust in God. God wanted him to see this in himself. God called him and he responded. God said to take his only son whom he loved and go to Moriah. This location is in Jerusalem and is the site now known as the Temple Mount. This is the first time the word love is used in the Bible. God tells him to offer Isaac as a burnt offering on a yet to be revealed mountain. This would be Mount Moriah or the location when Solomon built the Temple (II Chronicles 3: 1) many years later in about 973 B.C. Mount Moriah later became Mount Zion.

Abraham had to trust God immensely due to the fact He told him earlier that the covenant would go down to his son and be fulfilled through him and his progeny. Abraham had to realize that if God wanted to sacrifice Isaac He must intend to bring him back from the dead to continue the Abrahamic Covenant. Abraham had witnessed so many wonders from God he knew God's power and love for him. The text tells us explicitly what each step of Abraham's preparation and execution of the command are to relate sequentially Abraham's obedience. He travelled three days with Isaac and two young men. He reached a spot at the end of three days where he could see the place still far off where he must go. He then told the young men to stay with the donkey while Isaac and I go worship. He then says "we" will return. Again putting full trust in God to keep Isaac alive or bring him back from the dead.

Abraham then had Isaac carry the wood for the fire while he carried the fire ignition and the knife. Isaac asked his father where was the lamb for a burnt offering. The next statement is a strong prophetic verse indicating the sacrifice of Messiah who would also carry his own wood (cross) to His sacrifice many years later. Abraham says to Isaac that; "God will provide *Himself the lamb* for a burnt offering." Abraham and Isaac continued to the place where he bound Isaac and laid him on the wood of the altar. The Hebrew word for binding is Akeidah and this has become the name of this event. Isaac being a full-grown man could have easily resisted if he want to do that. Abraham was about 130 years old. Abraham stretched forth his hand with the knife to slay Isaac when the Angel of the Lord (preincarnate Jesus) called out to him to stop. The Angel of the Lord let Abraham know he passed the test. God provided a ram caught in a thicket for the necessary sacrifice. This is truly divine intervention and substitutionary atonement presented in a very realistic manner. Accordingly God did not spare His own Son.

*Romans 8: 32 He that spared not his own Son,
but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not
with him also freely give us all things*

Finally Abraham called the name of the place Jehovah-Jireh which means *God provides*.

NEXT WEEK: RECONFIRMATION OF THE ABRAHAMIC COVENANT AND THE DEATH OF SARAH

Please Call or e-mail with any questions or comments.

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