

## EXPOSITION OF GENESIS

### Message #41

### Genesis 17:15-21

**WHEN GOD CHOOSES TO BLESS AN INDIVIDUAL, ALL WHO ARE CONNECTED TO THAT INDIVIDUAL ALSO BENEFIT IN MANY WAYS.**

The specific benefits will be according to the decision of God and in spite of the previous failures of the people.

**INDIVIDUAL BLESSING #1** — The blessings given by God to Sarah . 17:15-19

**Way #1** - God blesses her by changing her name . 17:15

God changes Sarai's name to Sarah. In English the final vowel "i" is replaced by the consonant "h." Now the name Sarai or Sarah basically means princess or woman of nobility. The changing of the last letter does not alter this basic meaning. In Hebrew, the letter "i" has more of a singular in view and the letter "h" has more of a plural in view. The change most logically means that she would be the "princess of many ."

**Way #2** - God blesses her by promising her a son . 17:16a

As W.H. Griffith Thomas observed, this is the first time Sarah is told she will be the one who will be the mother of the promised seed (Thomas, p. 155). Through Isaac would come Jacob and through Jacob would come the Lion of the tribe of Judah (Genesis 49:10). If we keep in mind that Sarah is 90 years old (Genesis 17: 17), we learn that when God decides to bless someone, whether physically or spiritually, age is no barrier.

**Way #3** - God blesses her by promising her a lineage . 17:16b

Not only would she have a son, but through her would come nations and kings , which began with Isaac (Genesis 25:23). The most significant nation that would come through Sarah and Isaac was the nation Israel (Isaiah 51:2) and the most significant King was Jesus Christ (Matthew 1:1-2).

**(Response #1)** - The external worship response. 17:17a

Abraham was so overwhelmed that he fell on his face before God in reverence and humility.

**(Response #2)** - The external doubt response. 17:17b

The Hebrew Word "laugh" is one that speaks of a mocking type of laughter or of a sporting or jesting type of laughter (1 8: 12; 19: 14; 21 :9) which clearly has mockery in view.

**(Response #3)** - The internal doubt response. 17: 17c

Abraham had some serious doubts about a man who is about 100 years old and a woman who is 90.

Dr. Ross said, humanly speaking it seemed “incredible that a barren 90 year old woman could give birth to a son.”

**(Response #4)** - The external reasoning response. 17:18-19

Abraham thought this must be all connected to Ishmael, but God said, no, it is Sarah who will have a son. In fact, his name would be Isaac, which literally means sporting laughter.

**INDIVIDUAL BLESSING #2** - The blessings given by God to Ishmael . 17:20

Because Ishmael was connected to Abraham, God would bless him physically and multiply him and produce twelve princes through him (Genesis 25: 12-18). God would allow him to live a long, productive, fruitful life and would make him a great nation (21 :13, 18). The Arabs came through Ishmael.

**INDIVIDUAL BLESSING #3** - The blessing given by God to Isaac . 17:21

Ishmael would have many physical blessings, but the spiritual blessings and the covenantal promises of a land, king and kingdom, would come through Isaac .

Most every commentator remarks that this one verse certainly demonstrates that God is a God of distinguishing grace. This very point is proved by Paul in Galatians 4:21-31. Ishmael was a young boy of 13 (17 :25) when all of this happened, but he would not be the boy God would choose. The one God would choose was God’s choice, not Abraham’s, not Hagar’s and not Sarah’s.

Practical Application:

- 1) We need to trust God, not doubt God.
- 2) We need to reverently worship God, not lightly laugh at God.
- 3) We need to esteem each other, not demean each other.
- 4) We need to make certain what we are in our hearts is what we say through our lips.