

Genesis 21:1-21

Isaac & Ishmael

Child of laughter ...

I. The Story: Two Mothers

- A. The Birth of Laughter
- B. A Stain at the Feast
- C. The God Who Hears
- D. A Parting of Ways
- E. The Liberty Line

II. The Allegory: Two Covenants

- A. One Head
- B. Two Ways
 - 1. Slavery
 - 2. Freedom
- C. Two Cities
- D. Two Lines

... children of promise.

Children, Listen ...

1. What does the name Isaac mean?
2. Why was this a good name for him?
3. Why was Sarah mad at Ishmael?
4. What happened to Hagar and Ishmael?
5. Did God still take care of them?

A Tale of Two Women

It was the best of times, it was the worst of times. The son of promise, the child of laughter was born to Abraham and Sarah. But all was not good in the household of the patriarch of faith. Tensions rose over the two children of Abraham, the child of promise Isaac, and the child of doubt, Ishmael and came to a head at a party celebrating the younger child's weaning. While Sarah must have grasped something of the significance of her son in the plan of God's line of grace her reaction to Ishmael's mockery of Isaac was probably not a lofty spiritual reaction but the natural reaction of a mother in the face of jealous cruelty against her child. Sarah's response seems harsh as Hagar is put out of the household to fend for herself. God is gracious to her and provides for her in her desperation – she and her son will survive and a great nation will come from Ishmael after all. But graciousness and grace as we understand it are quite different. It is the line of Sarah, despite her cruelty, that represents God's grace to His people. Hers will in fact be the line through which grace itself is personified in Jesus Christ. While Abraham, the mothers of his children and the two boys could not have seen this fully from their circumstances in life, the apostle Paul sees in the scenario a profound allegory that illustrates the difference between bondage to sin and freedom in Christ. Standing alone the story is rich, revealing something of the character of God, providing many moral lessons, playing a significant role in the history of salvation and helping to further define the covenant of grace. And there is even more as the apostle Paul shows us in Galatians 4 that it conveys the radical difference between those set free in Christ and those still in slavery to the law of sin and death. This ancient incident asks a question of us today: are you a child of the slavery of unbelief or of promise through the grace of God? Only in our covenant head Jesus Christ are we no longer children of the slave but we are children of the free woman – not of this earthly city but of the heavenly Jerusalem.