

## EXPOSITION OF GENESIS

### Message #50

### Genesis 21:22-34

Whenever a nation, state, church or individual has treated the seed of Abraham (Israel) in a positive way, God has blessed it, but when it has treated it in a negative way God has cursed it.

**ABRAHAM'S TESTIMONY HAD SO DRAMATICALLY CHANGED IN SUCH A GOD-HONORING WAY IN THREE TO FOUR YEARS THAT ABIMELECH, A PHILISTINE KING, WANTS TO MAKE CERTAIN HE IS IN A GOOD RELATIONSHIP WITH ABRAHAM.**

Abraham's testimony had once been questioned by Abimelech (Genesis 20:9-10), now his testimony is revered and respected by Abimelech.

**NARRATIVE PART #1** - The request of the Philistine leaders to Abraham. 21:22-23

Abimelech was king of the Philistines (26:1) and Phicol was his military commander. Gerar, a city located in the Negev, between Beersheba and Gaza, was Abimelech's headquarters (20:2; 26:1). Gerar was located approximately 10 miles south of Gaza and Beersheba was located approximately 18-20 miles east and a little south of Gerar. This land, where Abraham lived, which was supposed to be his, was under the dominate control of the Philistines.

It is very significant to note that the first admission of Abimelech and Phicol (21:22) is the acknowledgement that they know God is **"with"** Abraham, in every thing he did. This would have been a tremendous encouragement to Abraham, who had made some wrong decisions in life and really made a mess of things with Hagar and Ishmael. When you have botched things and someone still recognizes God is with you, it is a humbling moment of grace. Even when Abraham made dumb decisions, God was with him. **Abraham had a testimony for God that became powerful and it was eventually known by the powerful men of his time.**

In verse 23, the request for Abraham to "swear that he would not deal falsely" with him was an admission by Abimelech that he realized that his existence and his blessings which he enjoyed in life hinged on his relationship with Abraham. The request to "swear" is one for Abraham to promise by oath that he will not deal deceptively with him or his lineage. In fact, some 60 years later, Abimelech still had this same view of things because he requests exactly the same thing from Isaac (Genesis 26:26-33).

When any person who is in a position of power recognizes that God is blessing him because he has faithful people of God in that society and purposes to maintain a good relationship with God's people, that person, that company, that power will be blessed by God.

**NARRATIVE PART #2** - The responses of Abraham to Abimelech. 21:24-34

This is a very interesting text because this is the first time in Biblical history that a foreign nation desires to develop a permanent peace treaty with Israel.

**Response #1** - Abraham responds by agreement. 21:24

In both the O.T. and the N.T. it is the mark of wisdom to pursue peace when possible. This is never an “at any cost” type of peace, but a “when possible” type of peace (Romans 12:17-18; II Corinthians 13:11; Colossians 4:5; I Thessalonians 4:11-12; 5:13). The reason Abraham could agree was because Abimelech had a proper view of God .

**Response #2** - Abraham responds by a complaint. 21:25-26

The Hebrew word “complain” is one that means Abraham rebuked Abimelech by bringing to light the matter of the well in such a way that it brought conviction on Abimelech (Gesenius, *Hebrew Lexicon*, pp. 347-348). Abimelech did not know anything about this initially, but there is an important point to see - **before peace may be achieved, wrongs need to be righted and restitution and reparation needs to be made.** If one wants to be right with God, sin must be admitted and addressed.

**Response #3** - Abraham responds by a covenant. 21:27-32

An oath changed a promise made between men into a promise made before God. It was customary for a covenantal agreement to be entered into by giving presents (I Kings 15:19; Isaiah 39:1). It is interesting that Abimelech had once given sheep and oxen to Abraham (20:14) and now Abraham was giving them to Abimelech. We may notice that it was the fact that Abraham gave Abimelech seven ewe lambs (21:28) that caused Abimelech to want to know what that meant (21:29).

According to the law, a ewe lamb was a sin offering (Leviticus 14:10; Numbers 6:14). Abraham, however, is not using it here as a sin offering, but as a goodwill gift . The number seven is stressed in this context and in the Bible because it is the number of completion. This pictured that this oath was completely binding. These seven would be a reminder that the well in Beersheba was an Abrahamic well and the place where they made their complete covenantal promise. Notice that this agreement is entered into on Abraham's terms. Abimelech is not the one calling the shots here, Abraham is the one. Abraham called this place “Beersheba” which means “well of the oath.”

**Response #4** - Abraham responds by worship. 21:33

Abraham worshipped God and realized that his relationship with God was “everlasting” because God was “Everlasting.” Abraham’s concept of God became more majestic: 1) Self-Existing God (12:7); 2) Most High God (14:22); Almighty God (17:1); Everlasting God (21:33). **Faith that honors God is developed over time and much of it is developed after previous failures.**

**Response #5** - Abraham responds by staying. 21:34

Abraham was able to live in the land of the Philistines in a peaceful existence and it was all due to his relationship with God.