

Abraham Blessed

Genesis 21

Abraham Blessed With A Son

Genesis 21:1-21

Promise Fulfilled: *Genesis 21:1-8*

Birth of Isaac

Twenty-five years after entering the land, Isaac was born. It was a long wait filled with numerous trials for Abraham and Sarah. In waiting they were humbled and their faith was strengthened (Psalm 27:14). Abraham and Sarah were unable to speed up God's plan, though they wanted too. The LORD visited Sarah when He was ready to bless. God is punctual and is never bound by anyone's expectation. As promised, the LORD visited Sarah and they realized His faithfulness. All of their doubts were removed and their disappointments were behind them.

Isaac was a gift from God to an unworthy couple. Abraham and Sarah were impatient and at times acted in disbelief, but God is gracious and merciful to sinners (Ephesians 2:8-9; 1 John 1:9). Isaac's birth was a miracle, occurring after both were too old to have children. The LORD is able to work in ways we cannot understand. He is faithful and His word can be trusted. All things worked out for Abraham and Sarah, just as He said they would (Romans 8:28).

Blessing of Isaac

Abraham obediently named his son Isaac, which means laughter. His name was given from God and would remind his parents of their laughter before Him.

1. *Abraham* – laugh of amazement (Genesis 17:17).
2. *Sarah* – laugh of distrust but after being confronted she lived by faith (Genesis 18:12-15).

Abraham circumcised Isaac, like God commanded (Genesis 17:10-14). After being greatly blessed, Abraham remembered the LORD'S direction and was obedient. There is never a reason to neglect God's commands. Sarah praised God and laughed with joy due to the LORD'S blessings. Sarah credited God because she knew Isaac's birth was something only He was able to perform. Considering their old age and Sarah's barrenness, it was a miraculous birth.

Isaac grew and was weaned. This implies he had a healthy childhood and matured at a normal rate. On the day Isaac was weaned Abraham had a great feast to celebrate the occasion. According to custom of the day, children were weaned at two or three years of age. It signifies the achieving a new stage in their life. Growth is natural and good. Today many young people remain immature and become a burden. Believers often fail to grow spiritually and remain weak in the faith (1 Corinthians 3:1-3; Hebrews 5:12-14).

Problem in the Home: Genesis 21:9-21

Ishmael's Attitude

Ishmael cruelly mocked Isaac. Some believe he was simply joking or playing around, but in Galatians, his mocking is referred to as persecution (Galatians 4:28-29). Ishmael obviously treated Isaac with hostility and probably acted as a bully on more than one occasion. Ishmael, being fourteen years older than Isaac, was around seventeen years of age when he was caught mocking him. He was at the age when a rebellious heart often surfaces, authority is challenged, and human depravity becomes evident. Ishmael, being the only child for many years, may have resented the attention Isaac received and hated the idea that Isaac would inherit the blessings. In mocking Isaac his mistake was great.

1. *He despised God's plan* – scorning the one God chose to bless.
2. *He displayed a jealous and bitter heart* – it was an outward expression of his disdain.

Mocking is a grievous sin that hurts others. Today, it is deeply entrenched in our society with bullying being common.

Sarah witnessed the cruel treatment firsthand and furiously demanded Ishmael, along with Hagar, to be cast out. Sarah protected Isaac from the problem, bullying. Parents, it is your responsibility to protect your children, both physically and spiritually. Do not allow the world to ruin or corrupt their lives. Sarah may have seemed hasty but her understanding of God's promise was correct. She was a good judge of character and recognized the spirit of jealousy that was taking root in their home. If bullies are not stopped they will continue until their actions become violent. The situation had probably spiraled out of control and this was Sarah's only choice. Abraham was grieved because of the conflict.

1. *Grieved due to Ishmael's actions* – he loved both Ishmael and Isaac.
2. *Grieved due to Sarah's request* – it was severe.

Troubled and unsure, Abraham looked to the LORD for guidance (Proverbs 3:5-6). With a desire to please all involved and to act correctly, he sought God's wisdom in the matter. He was reminded that Isaac was chosen to inherit the blessings of the promise (Genesis 17:19-21). Ishmael, due to his conduct, hurt the family. As God knew, Ishmael would never change but continue in his wild direction, however, God would protect Ishmael and bless him greatly. Abraham's sin in taking Hagar as his wife was a mistake but Ishmael personally was not, both Abraham and God cared for him. At this point the LORD directed Abraham to let Ishmael go. It would be difficult but better for Isaac and the entire family. Abraham and Sarah's decision to assist God continued to burden them for many years. The LORD forgave and graciously blessed them but they had to deal with the effects (Galatians 6:7-8). Hagar and Ishmael were not innocent in the matter, both allowed pride into their hearts and paid the price (Proverbs 16:18).

Ishmael's Departure

Abraham rose up early, packed food and water, then sent Hagar and Ishmael on their way. It was not his initial desire, but he obediently followed God's direction. It appears Abraham was stingy but he may have planned for them to settle in a certain location. Settlements were found throughout the area. Hagar and Ishmael wandered in the wilderness, and evidently after becoming lost they were soon without water.

Discouragement set in and Hagar was certain death would overtake them. She left Ishmael under a shrub in order to perish, then sat at a distance and wept. Hagar did not want to see her son die, and she had no desire to forsake him, so she remained nearby. It was a terrible situation for a loving mother to be in. God heard Ishmael's cry and sent His angel; nothing escapes God. Hagar was directed to assist Ishmael and told he would live and become a great nation. The LORD opened her eyes and provided a well with water. Hagar filled her bottle and took it to her son. Both were spared because the LORD is good (Psalm 34:6).

Ishmael's Future

The LORD blessed Ishmael allowing him to live and prosper. He grew up and resided in the wilderness of Paran, which was a desert region on the Sinai Peninsula. Ishmael became an archer, hunter. The bow was the weapon of choice for those in the desert. Hagar chose a wife for Ishmael from her homeland of Egypt. Ishmael had twelve sons and became a great nation (Genesis 25:13-15). His descendants would become bitter rivals to Isaac's descendants. The LORD encouraged Hagar and Ishmael, lifting them out of their misery. The LORD often works when all seems hopeless.

Abraham Blessed With Peace

Genesis 21:22-34

Abimelech Approached Abraham: Genesis 21:22-24

Recognition of God's Presence

Several years passed since Abraham and Abimelech's first encounter. This meeting was different. Abimelech and his general went to Abraham looking to establish a peace treaty. The Philistine king wanted Abraham's friendship and probably his assistance if needed. Abimelech recognized the LORD'S presence in Abraham's life. It was not evident the first time they met but after observing Abraham for a while it became clear he belonged to God. When believers live according to God's Word it will be noticed (Matthew 5:14-16). Abimelech also knew firsthand that God protected Abraham and heard his prayers (Genesis 20).

Abimelech desired Abraham's friendship because of his relationship to God. The Philistine king was a powerful leader and wisely wanted to associate with a righteous man. Today, many leaders are foolishly aligning themselves with the ungodly and attacking the righteous. There is no fear of God in their hearts (Proverbs 1:7). These leaders, many ungodly themselves, care only about pleasing the

worldly crowd. Never forget the righteous bless a nation and not the ungodly (Proverbs 14:34). When leaders cater to the wicked and reject the righteous, a nation is bound to decline (Proverbs 11:11, 29:8).

Request For Peace

Abimelech requested Abraham's promise to treat him and his family fairly. This was a subtle reminder of Abraham's earlier deception and something he would have to live with. A good deed might be recognized but a bad deed will never be forgotten. It often takes years to restore a testimony after it has been tarnished. The Philistine king looked for an honest and transparent relationship, where they could trust each other (Proverbs 25:19). Abimelech also wanted a lasting friendship, a lifelong commitment from Abraham. Commitment is often missing in the life of believers. We want God to be faithful to us but we want to choose our faithfulness to Him, serving only when it is convenient. The LORD wants commitment from those that belong to Him (Romans 12:1-2).

Abimelech sought this peace based upon their relationship, reminding Abraham of his kind treatment. Abimelech restored Sarah as his wife, gave him numerous gifts, and permission to dwell peacefully in the land. The Philistine king was generous and he was hoping Abraham would be likewise (Ephesians 4:32). Abimelech wanted this peace agreement to cover his entire land, which included all under his authority. He was not like many modern politicians who care only about being elected and remaining in office. Those leaders seek their selfish desires and disregard what's best for the people. Abimelech cared for those in his land and considered their future prosperity. Abraham agreed and promised to treat Abimelech and his family fairly. Abraham was considerate of others and willing to make peace (Romans 12:18).

Abraham Reproved Abimelech: *Genesis 21:25-34*

Accusation and Defense

Abraham took this opportunity to address a problem. Some of Abimelech's men had taken a well by force that belonged to Abraham. Evidently it was a violent altercation. Wells were vital resources because creeks and streams would often go dry during the summer months. To take a well was considered an act of hostility. Abraham did not accuse him personally but informed him of the situation. Abraham handled the problem correctly, treating Abimelech with kindness and respect. When dealing with a problem, be courteous and present the facts. Abraham was willing to have peace but he wanted the same promise from Abimelech.

Abimelech defended himself, claiming he was unaware of what had taken place. This is not surprising; leaders are often accused of actions they have no knowledge of. The Philistine king agreed to return the well to Abraham and planned to make things right. A good leader will address problems instead of ignoring them hoping they will disappear. Abraham allowed the Philistine king to correct the situation and the matter was settled.

Acquired Peace

Abraham gave sheep and oxen to Abimelech and a covenant was made. Both wanted peace and both promised to maintain peace. To have peace, all parties involved must be in agreement. Abraham also gave seven ewe lambs to verify his ownership of the well in question. With both in agreement, the

two leaders lived peacefully in the area. The peace continued the rest of Abraham's life. After his death it began to splinter, due to the Philistines destruction of the wells and Isaac's deception (Genesis 26:6-18). By the time of Israel's first kings, Saul and David, one wonders if peace ever existed between the Israelites and Philistines. But it did, because Abraham walked with God and Abimelech desired his friendship.

Abraham planted a grove. It must be pointed out that this grove had nothing to do with the idolatry found among the pagans during Old Testament times (Exodus 34:10-17; Deuteronomy 7:1-5; Judges 3:7; 1 Kings 14:15). The Hebrew word refers to a tamarisk tree and is never used in association with the groves of idolatry. Evidently Abraham planted trees for shade or appearance, implying he was comfortable in the land because of the peace agreement. Abraham also worshiped the LORD. His place of residence often changed but his love for God remained the same. Abraham remained for many years in the land of the Philistines. It was really his land but the Philistines inhabited it, so he lived as a sojourner in the land promised to him (Hebrews 11:9).

Conclusion

Though Abraham strayed on many occasions, the LORD was true to His word. Abraham witnessed God's power and praised Him with obedience. Isaac was born, peace came to the land, and Ishmael was promised to be a great nation. The LORD gave Abraham more than he may have expected. There are times when God's power and generosity are so great, all you are able to do is thank and praise Him. As you live today, find comfort, knowing God generously provides for those that belong to Him. His power, grace, and mercy should lead you to proclaim, *Let all the earth fear the LORD: let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him. Psalm 33:8*

Point to Ponder

The LORD is powerful and punctual, always sufficient and always on time.

Quote

"God has indeed deserved our thanks. He never ceases to do us good. So also our thanks should have no end." John Lange

Questions

What was Ishmael guilty of?

What did Abraham do when grieved?

How did the LORD encourage Hagar?

What impressed Abimelech concerning Abraham?

What new truth have you learned from this lesson?