

***“The Foundations of Our Faith Revealed, Theme by Theme, Genesis —
The Sovereignty of God, Part 3”***

Review: “The Sovereignty of God in Genesis: What Hath God Wrought?”

- ***What Hath God Wrought? Abram and Sarai Fail Regarding the Promise***
- ***What Hath God Wrought? The Promise Renewed and a New Name Is Given***
- ***What Hath God Wrought? the Challenge of Ishmael and Hagar Continues***

- ***What Hath God Wrought? Abram and Sarai Fail Regarding the Promise***
 - ***The Challenge of Ishmael begins as Ishmael, the Son of Doubt and Confusion Takes Center Stage — chapter 16. Here we see that both Abram and Sarai prove their unfaithfulness regarding their hope and promise of a son as Sarai gives her Egyptian maid over to Abram. Abram receives her and a son is conceived:***

Gen. 16:5-7

5 And Sarai said unto Abram, My wrong *be* upon thee: I have given my maid into thy bosom; and when she saw that she had conceived, I was despised in her eyes: the LORD judge between me and thee.
6 But Abram said unto Sarai, Behold, thy maid *is* in thy hand; do to her as it pleaseth thee. And when Sarai dealt hardly with her, she fled from her face.

7 And the angel of the LORD found her by a fountain of water in the wilderness, by the fountain in the way to Shur.

- ***So the Lord has mercy on Hagar! This has a great impact on the future generations of those in the Middle East, especially the Arabian peninsula. Are these perhaps the Muslim peoples today?***

Gen. 16:8-16

8 And he said, Hagar, Sarai's maid, whence camest thou? and whither wilt thou go? And she said, I flee from the face of my mistress Sarai.

9 And the angel of the LORD said unto her, Return to thy mistress, and submit thyself under her hands.

10 And the angel of the LORD said unto her, I will multiply thy seed exceedingly, that it shall not be numbered for multitude.

11 And the angel of the LORD said unto her, Behold, thou *art* with child, and shalt bear a son, and shalt call his name Ishmael; because the LORD hath heard thy affliction.

12 And he will be a wild man; his hand *will be* against every man, and every man's hand against him; and he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren.

13 And she called the name of the LORD that spake unto her, Thou God seest me: for she said, Have I also here looked after him that seeth me?

14 Wherefore the well was called Beerlahairoi; behold, *it is* between Kadesh and Bered.

15 And Hagar bare Abram a son: and Abram called his son's name, which Hagar bare, Ishmael.

16 And Abram was fourscore and six years old, when Hagar bare Ishmael to Abram.

- *Yes, there is a strong emphasis here on God's sovereign rule over humanity and his called out people. But I will comment specifically on the name of the well. An additional question, though, would be regarding who might have named the well. Was it Abraham, perhaps, based on Hagar's testimony? It seems so.*

The meaning of the name is also an interesting subject indeed. Some commentators think that the meaning cannot be that Hagar testified simply that she was seeking the Lord that sees all, that sees everyone, even Egyptians running from their mistresses in the desert. Rather, the meaning seems to be that she was still living even after seeing the Lord God himself!!

The translation in that case would be rather this: "Do I see, here, even after the Vision? Or, "Do I live, after seeing God?"

- *Later, Isaac will dwell at this well. I wonder whether Ishmael or at least Hagar did not reside there before Isaac. We read of Isaac in chapter 24:*

Gen. 24:58-64

58 And they called Rebekah, and said unto her, Wilt thou go with this man? And she said, I will go.

59 And they sent away Rebekah their sister, and her nurse, and Abraham's servant, and his men.

60 And they blessed Rebekah, and said unto her, Thou *art* our sister, be thou *the mother* of thousands of millions, and let thy seed possess the gate of those which hate them.

61 And Rebekah arose, and her damsels, and they rode upon the camels, and followed the man: and the servant took Rebekah, and went his way.

62 And Isaac came from the way of the well Lahairoi; for he dwelt in the south country.

63 And Isaac went out to meditate in the field at the eventide: and he lifted up his eyes, and saw, and, behold, the camels were coming.

64 And Rebekah lifted up her eyes, and when she saw Isaac, she lighted off the camel.

- *Praise God. Isaac has supplanted Hagar indeed at the well Lahairoi! And it was there that Rebecca first saw her new counterpart in life, Isaac, and there that he first saw her. Wonderful. To see God and live. Amen.*
- *What Hath God Wrought? The Promise Renewed and a New Name Is Given*
 - *The Lord God renews the promise of the seed, changes both Abram's and Sarai's names to Abraham, and Sarah. — chapter 17*

The names have meanings. Abram means “exalted father” while Abraham means “Father of a multitude”! In verse 15 we also read that Sarai's name will be changed to Sarah. Sarai means “princely” while Sarah means “princess”! God was engraving both Abram and Sarai, for adding the fifth letter of the Hebrew alphabet adds grace. For 5 is the numerical number of grace in the Bible.

Introduction:

Thomas Constable has a great note on this: “To provide these blessings, God had to overcome many obstacles. Each obstacle provided an opportunity for Abram to grow stronger in faith, and each one tested his faith. Each episode in the Abraham narrative reveals something important about God's power and faithfulness. It should also teach the reader something about responding to God's promises in the midst of various difficulties. This is the plot of the Abraham narrative.”

“... these lessons for Israel's benefit, so that the Israelites would emulate Abram's faith. Abram was not without his flaws, and his failings prove as instructive as his successes, as is true of all biblical characters.”

The following were the 12 obstacles that Abraham encountered in his faith journey:

The Genesis account regarding Abraham is very much about how Abraham and Sarah were chosen out by Almighty God to head up a new nation, God's chosen nation Israel and ultimately to be the chosen nation and family for the fulfillment of the Gen. 3:15 promise. As one might expect, satan was watching with all of his minions to see how God was working so that he might interfere. There are in total twelve challenges listed here in these chapters. All are in reference to God's chosen one Abraham becoming the father of many nations and in particular the father of the son of the promise, Isaac, the heir, the only heir, designated by God to have the promises given. These are the twelve and all have to do with the promises God had given to Abraham. For they all require that Abraham have a son, the son of the promise:

- “1. Sarai was barren and incapable of producing an heir (11:30).
2. Abram had to leave the Promised Land, which God had told him he would inherit (12:10).
3. Abram's life was in danger in Egypt (12:11-20).
4. Abram's nephew (heir?) Lot (Lot's servants) quarreled with him (Abram's servants) over the land (ch. 13).
5. Abram entered a war and could have died (14:1-16).
6. Abram's life was in danger from retaliation in the Promised Land (15:1).
7. God ruled Eliezer out as Abram's heir (15:2-3).
8. Hagar, pregnant with Abram's son (heir?), departed (16:6).
9. Abimelech threatened Sarai's reputation and child (heir?) in Gerar (ch. 20).
10. Abram had two heirs (21:8-11).
11. God commanded Abram to slay his heir (ch. 22).
12. Abram could not find a proper wife for his heir (24:5).”

[QUOTED BY CONSTABLE]

Today's Outline: The Gift of a Son — Challenged, Provided, and Preserved:

- ***The Gift of a Son, Challenged — The Challenge of Ishmael and Hagar Continues***
- ***The Gift of a Son, Provided — The Son of the Promise is Given in Due Time***
- ***The Gift of a Son, Preserved — Isaac's Sacrifice is Abraham's Great Test***
- ***Then next time: The Gift of a Son, Projected — What about the Sand and the Stars?***

I. The Gift of a Son, Challenged — The Challenge of Ishmael and Hagar Continues:

- ***We come today to chapter 21 of the Genesis account where Isaac's birth is mentioned first but after that Ishmael is still very much in the***

middle of the picture. One might have expected that the challenge of Ishmael would have at this point quietly passed away. But no, as we shall see today, that was not to be the case. For even today, those challenges continue. The enemy is still active in his quest always to thwart the purpose and work of Almighty God!

- *Yes, the Son of the Promise will be brought forth by the power of Almighty God. But even at that, there will be consequences of the fruit of sin by Sarah and Abraham. For Hagar and Ishmael will continue to be right in the center of the sacred story. But again, God's absolute sovereignty over mankind and his people will be found written on every page of Genesis*

[READ] Gen. 21:9-10

9 And Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, which she had born unto Abraham, mocking.

10 Wherefore she said unto Abraham, Cast out this bondwoman and her son: for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, even with Isaac.

- *Sarah's courage here is seen. Hagar's mocking was a powerful reminder that the seed through Hagar was not of God. She was now convinced that there was only one son of the promise and it was Isaac. Yes, Ishmael would be blessed greatly, but not he was not and could not ever be the son of the promise and the promised heir.*

She did of course know well that it was her own unbelief that had led to this reality and that it brought sorrow and spiritual challenges that would continue:

- *This should not be considered surprising to us who know the promises of God. For did not the Lord God promise before that the challenge of Ismael and his offspring would continue? Remember 16:11-15 from our study last time?*

Gen. 16:10-12

10 And the angel of the LORD said unto her, I will multiply thy seed exceedingly, that it shall not be numbered for multitude.

11 And the angel of the LORD said unto her, Behold, thou art with child, and shalt bear a son, and shalt call his name Ishmael; because the LORD hath heard thy affliction.

12 And he will be a wild man; his hand *will be* against every man, and every man's hand against him; and he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren.

- *So the fruit of their unbelief and sin would continue even though they should walk righteously before their God. So it is often the case in our lives as well. Let us see how the story continues for the sovereignty of God is written here in every line. For God is working in the midst of this grievous sin as we shall see. We shall see how the promise regarding the seed of the woman would always be challenged by Ishmael and his offspring always nearby and this continues into our current day.*

The order here in this chapter of Genesis is reversed from what I will share today with the focus on Isaac's birth first and Ishmael's future posterity second, but I will change that this morning since the background of Isaac's birth is revealed so clearly in this chapter for emphasis: for even when the son has been given and Isaac has been born, the challenge will continue:

Gen. 21:11-15

11 And the thing was very grievous in Abraham's sight because of his son.

12 And God said unto Abraham, Let it not be grievous in thy sight because of the lad, and because of thy bondwoman; in all that Sarah hath said unto thee, hearken unto her voice; for in Isaac shall thy seed be called.

13 And also of the son of the bondwoman will I make a nation, because he *is* thy seed.

14 And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and took bread, and a bottle of water, and gave *it* unto Hagar, putting *it* on her shoulder, and the child, and sent her away: and she departed, and wandered in the wilderness of Beersheba.

15 And the water was spent in the bottle, and she cast the child under one of the shrubs.

- *Hagar is cast out along with her son and she loses hope quickly, it seems. But God is of course not finished with them yet since he has made promises that shall be kept, promises which we know*

thousands of years later now are still a reality for God's beloved and chosen nation:

Gen. 21:16-21

16 And she went, and sat her down over against *him* a good way off, as it were a bowshot: for she said, Let me not see the death of the child. And she sat over against *him*, and lift up her voice, and wept.

17 And God heard the voice of the lad; and the angel of God called to Hagar out of heaven, and said unto her, What aileth thee, Hagar? fear not; for God hath heard the voice of the lad where he *is*.

18 Arise, lift up the lad, and hold him in thine hand; for I will make him a great nation.

19 And God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water; and she went, and filled the bottle with water, and gave the lad drink.

20 And God was with the lad; and he grew, and dwelt in the wilderness, and became an archer.

21 And he dwelt in the wilderness of Paran: and his mother took him a wife out of the land of Egypt.

- *So the promises were given and they will be kept, all can be so sure of that, taking God always at his word.*

II. The Gift of a Son, Provided — The Son of the Promise is Given in Due Time:

- *The Sovereignty of God ... The Son of the Promise is finally given ... but the challenge of Hagar and Ishmael continues — chapter 21*

[READ] Gen. 21:1-8

1 And the LORD visited Sarah as he had said, and the LORD did unto Sarah as he had spoken.

2 For Sarah conceived, and bare Abraham a son in his old age, at the set time of which God had spoken to him.

3 And Abraham called the name of his son that was born unto him, whom Sarah bare to him, Isaac.

4 And Abraham circumcised his son Isaac being eight days old, as God had commanded him.

5 And Abraham was an hundred years old, when his son Isaac was born unto him.

6 And Sarah said, God hath made me to laugh, so *that* all that hear will laugh with me.

7 And she said, Who would have said unto Abraham, that Sarah should have given children suck? for I have born him a son in his old age.

8 And the child grew, and was weaned: and Abraham made a great feast the same day that Isaac was weaned.

- ***What stands out to me here are these:***
 - ***Verses 1 & 2 reassert the absolute and final sovereignty of Almighty God in such personal matters as this, even in the context of the sin of mankind! No power, even satan himself, can thwart God's plan and purpose. Isaac was born "at the set time" established by God and "as he had spoken". God speaks and all the creation must obey!***

There are many applications of this fundamental truth to our lives today, aren't there? Verse 4 shows Abraham's obedience then in circumcising his son. And Verse 5 states Abraham's age as 100, 25 years after the promise was given. That is a long time to wait but not so long really since in faith the time would have been greatly shortened. But, due to unbelief and disobedience much had happened during those years, sadly.
 - ***Then, there is the amazing record in verses 6 & 7 of Sarah's response to Isaac's birth: "God hath made me to laugh, so that all that hear will laugh with me". This is remarkable.***
- ***And so we reach the main subject for today's study here in Genesis, Abraham's greatest test, the sacrifice of his believed and promised son, Isaac.***

III. The Gift of a Son, Preserved — Isaac's Sacrifice is Abraham's Great Test:

[READ] Gen. 22:1-4

1 And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt [test] Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham: and he said, Behold, here I am.

2 And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, 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 up early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son, and clave the wood for the burnt offering, and rose up, and went unto the place of which God had told him.

4 Then on the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes, and saw the place afar off.

- ***Three days Isaac was dead - compare with the 1 Cor. 15 account of Paul's gospel"***

1 Cor. 15:1-10

1 Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand;

2 By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain.

3 For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures;

4 And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:

5 And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve:

6 After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep.

7 After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles.

8 And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time.

9 For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.

10 But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.

- ***Notice the plural here in V. 4, "according to the scriptures". But the gospel accounts were not yet written! So it must be Old Testament scriptures that Paul was referring to here, right? But where in the Old Testament do we find that revelation? Immediately we might think of Jonas and the whale. In fact our Lord referred to that in reference to the three days in the heart of the earth before the resurrection (referenced in John 1 & Matt. 12). So the book of Jonah would be one reference.***

But where is the other? We must turn to the letter to the Hebrews to understand this better, for there Paul explains this for us:

[READ] Heb. 11:17-19

17 By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son,

18 Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called:

19 Accounting that God was able to raise *him* up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure.

- *There is a great blessing here for all of us who take God at his precious word. And that is this:*
 - *Abraham had taken the Lord God at his word. He had believed what God had told him about the promises that all depended on the giving of a son, and heir of the promises.*
 - *And, by faith, he also would be obedient to God's command to offer up his son, even the son of the promise. So, when the command was given, Abraham's faith rendered his son Isaac dead! This would be the ultimate sacrifice and challenge of Abraham's life. So he does not tell Sarah of this but begins the preparation with Isaac to leave the next morning to go to the place that God would show that they might "worship"!*
 - *So the past tense here, "offered" proves to be very significant.*
 - *After three days they are at the mount of Moriah (in our modern day Jerusalem). Isaac was dead by faith for three days — and he would be brought back to life by faith as well when "God himself provided a lamb" on the mount.*
- *Abraham believed God. He had been commanded to offer up his son and he intended by faith to do so. All the objections his wife might have offered or his own humanity would have suggested are put aside entirely. His faith was indeed a resurrection faith, that is clear from the Hebrews 11 account. So it is in Genesis 22 then that the second reference to the three days is found. Wonderful indeed.*

This account in Genesis then presents to us a type of the coming offering up of God's only beloved son that after three days in the tomb he might be raised again for our justification. Amen.

[READ] Gen. 22:5-8

5 And Abraham said unto his young men, Abide ye here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and *[we shall]* come again to you.

6 And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering, and laid it upon Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a 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, My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering: so they went both of them together.

- *Abraham in faith spoke truly, for God would himself provide (or provide himself) a lamb. Wonderful. But verse 5 implies that they would return after worship together! So Abraham believed God and his faith was a resurrection faith. And it all was based on the sovereign work of an all sovereign God to keep the promises made to his saints. And it all goes back ultimately to Gen. 3:15 and the promise regarding the seed of the woman and satan's ultimate defeat by him.*
- *As we saw today, comparing scripture with scripture yields great blessings as God teaches us his truth through his word of truth, the Bible.*

[READ] Gen. 22:9-14

9 And they came to the place which God had told him of; and Abraham built an 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 the LORD called unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham: and he said, Here am I.

12 And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing 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 a 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 Jehovahjireh: as it is said to this day, In the mount of the LORD it shall be seen.

- *The Sovereignty of God again prevails, in the face of its greatest test, in this case, the command by God Almighty, to sacrifice Isaac, the Son of the Promise!*

NEXT TIME:

IV. The Gift of a Son, Projected — What about the Sand and the Stars?

- *The Stars & Sands promise is given repeatedly — Gen. 15 (to Abram), Gen. 22 (to Abraham now), and then for Isaac, Gen. 26:4:*

[READ] Gen. 22:15-18

15 And the angel of the LORD called unto Abraham out of heaven the second time,

16 And said, By myself have I sworn, saith the LORD, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son:

17 That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies;

18 And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice.

- *The Sovereignty of God ...*
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Conclusions and Application:

- *Again, what must we conclude? It is simply this, that the Sovereignty of God is written on every page of Genesis.*