



“The Flesh, the Cross, and Resurrection Perspective” (Genesis 21-22)

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THE TEXT

Genesis 21

v.1 The miracle child! Go back and summarize how long it has been since God promised Abraham and Sarah that he would give them children “as numerous as the stars in the sky.”

v.2, The exact time was not given until 18:10.

v.3 See 17:15-17; 18:10-15.

v.4 Review chapter 17 on circumcision, noting that both Abraham and Ishmael were circumcised (17:24).

v.5 Hey parent, can you imagine having your first child at 100 years old?

vv.8-10 This trouble began back in chapter 16, when Abraham and Sarah made a fleshly decision that resulted in fleshly offspring. Remember that Hagar was picked up while they were in Egypt.

vv.11-13 This is both comforting and distressing for Abraham. He loves Ishmael, even though Ishmael is the “offspring of the flesh.” Refer to 17:15-18.

vv.14-20 This reveals to us that God loves Ishmael too. Children born of a fleshly decision are still loved by God!

v.21 There are two messages here. One we just noted, that God loves even children conceived by a fleshly decision. Now for the second message in this true story. Ishmael’s mother is from Egypt. His mom naturally gets him a wife from Egypt. Egypt = “the world.” The line of Ishmael is no longer recorded after this (interesting).

The Desert of Paran is in the northeast portion of the Sinai peninsula. Mt. Sinai is where God gave Moses The Law, and it is The Law that condemns our worldliness, our flesh. See Galatians 4:21-5:6.

This story has very practical lessons for us:

1. The flesh wants to be the heir (to reign, rule).
 - The flesh was born first!
 - It is interesting that for some thirteen years now, there have been no problems like we see here. Why? Because until the son of the promise is born, there is no real struggle. The flesh reigns. But when one receives a new nature (born again), conflict between the two natures begins.
2. Freedom from the flesh requires more than an “outward circumcision.”
 - Ishmael was circumcised (Gen.17:24).
 - One must be “born from above”; a miracle birth (John 1).
3. Whatever is born of the flesh cannot live in peace with that which is born of the Spirit.
 - See Rom.7:14-25.
 - Don't forget this is the basis upon which the Pharisees constantly condemned Jesus and His disciples. The law always condemns...
4. We must “make no provision” for the flesh.
 - Rom.13:14 But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof.
 - Rom.6: 11 In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. 12 Therefore **do not let sin reign** in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires.
 - Matt.5: 30 And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell.
 - Matt.18: 8 If your hand or your foot causes you to sin cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life maimed or crippled than to have two hands or two feet and be thrown into eternal fire. 9 And if your eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into the fire of hell.
 - NOTE: The flesh will ALWAYS win unless we choose to crucify it! (“I die daily...”).

vv.22-34 Living in peace at the “well of the oath.”

* Living in the world but not being of the world. Here we see Abraham as a much more mature saint. He has made some foolish decisions along the way. Even the last time he met Abimelech he made a blunder. There, he acted deceptively (chapter 20).. Now,

Abimelech's servants seek to take advantage of Abraham. But Abraham acts with character, maturity. The flesh is no longer the heir. Abraham has "done away with the flesh," and it shows here!

* It is great when one comes to the place where they have gotten victory over the flesh. Their life is now really consecrated to the Lord and they are living "at peace."

Genesis 22:

v.1a "Some time later" was years later, because in this chapter Isaac is a young man.

v.2 I have thought and thought about this command God gives to Abraham, and tried to imagine if it were me in his sandals. I'm not sure what I would do. I pray I would do exactly what he did.

vv.3-4 I think it is interesting that the Holy Spirit notes "the third day" here. Mt. Moriah is about 50 miles from Beersheba. Abraham had three days to think about what God had commanded him to do. What was going through his mind during those three days?

Heb.11: 17 By faith Abraham, when God tested him, offered Isaac as a sacrifice. He who had received the promises was about to sacrifice his one and only son, 18 even though God had said to him, "It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned." 19 Abraham reasoned that God could raise the dead, and figuratively speaking, he did receive Isaac back from death.

Abraham had already seen the Lord provide a miracle birth (Isaac conceived when Abraham was "as good as dead).

* Eph. 2:1 As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins...4 But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy 5 made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions...

v.5 The verbs here are both plural ("We" will worship and "we" will come back).

vv.6-8 God will provide "himself" a sacrifice.

v.9 Isaac knows what is happening, and yet he does not resist. Did he struggle? I'm certain he did. Remember Abraham is very old. Isaac could have overpowered his father, but he did not. Isaac is a willing sacrifice!

vv.10-12 Abraham was willing to slay his one and only son, all because he thought it was the will of God.

v.13 God provides the sacrifice.

v.14 Exactly what mountain was this? Mt Moriah. And if you did not already know, Mt Moriah is where Mt. Calvary is located. And so we have a complete and undeniable picture painted for us through this true to life story. Just as Hagar and Ishmael paint a figurative picture, so

do Abraham and Isaac here. Do you see the picture? A miraculous conception, an only son, a father willing to sacrifice his one and only son in the will of God. See Isaiah 53:4-6, 10a.

vv.15-19 Verse 18 speaks of Christ (Galatians 3:16). But while we know this, let's think about the practical reality of what is happening in Abraham's life here. You might say that Abraham has passed the ultimate test of his faith in God, that of being willing to offer his one and only son as a sacrifice in the will of God. Now he looks forward to the Lord making his descendants "as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore." Of course this would mean that Isaac would have children. But before any prospects of a wife for Isaac appear, we read vv.20-24. While now waiting for God to fulfill his promise of Abraham's descendants being as numerous as the stars, he hears about all the kids his brother Nahor is having. And please note with me that even Nahor's concubine is pumping out the children! You know what this news would have been to Abraham? A TEST. You would think the testing of his faith would be over after his willingness to sacrifice Isaac. But it was not. When would it be over? The answer: The same time as yours and mine.

LESSONS

1. The testing of our faith will continue until we see Jesus.
2. We must make no provision for the flesh.
3. Once the flesh has been dealt with, we now have the opportunity to move on to greater maturity in our faith. Getting victory over the flesh is not the end? No! it's really only the beginning. Now we have an opportunity to be tested. Why would God test us?
4. Reasons for testing
 - a. To prove our faith
 - I Peter 1: 6 In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. 7 These have come so that your faith--of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire--may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.
 - b. To "improve" our faith
 - James 1: 2 Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, 3 because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. 4 Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.
 - To build character

- c. To allow us to identify with the nature of God (II Peter 1:4)
 - He is a God of surrender and sacrifice as a result of love...
 - The surrender is seen in the son, the sacrifice in the father.
 - Phil.3: 10 I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death...
- 5. Our willingness to offer ourselves as a sacrifice in the will of God (Rom.12:1).
 - * Requires resurrection perspective (Rom.8:18)
- 6. Our willingness to offer what (or who) we love most as a sacrifice in the will of God.
 - * Requires resurrection perspective (Heb.11:19)