

Bibles???

The Word of God is the Absolute Truth and the Final Authority

In 1981, Tom Petty came out with one of his most famous songs titled, “The Waiting”

Regarding the lyrics to the song, Tom Petty in an interview stated, that the chorus of the song came to him pretty quickly but that he had a hard time coming up with the rest of the song.

Regarding the meaning of the song, he stated, “It's about waiting for your dreams and not knowing if they will come true.”

He added, I've always felt it was an optimistic song.

Waiting for your dreams and not knowing if they will come true – it doesn't sound so optimistic does it???

As believers in Jesus Christ, we also wait – however, we don't wait blindly upon something that may or may not happen.

We wait upon that day when we will be by His side.

We wait upon that day when we will be surrounded by His glory for eternity.

We wait upon that day when we will have glorified bodies just like we have been reminded of on Sunday mornings by Paul.

And we know for a fact that, that day will come. Why?

because God's word says so.

We have that promise.

This evening, as we continue our study through the book of Genesis, here in chapter 21, the wait is finally over for Abraham and Sarah.

God delivers on His promise. Why?

Because He is faithful to His word.

Let's Pray...

[Genesis 21:1-3 NKJV] 1 And the LORD visited Sarah as He had said, and the LORD did for Sarah as He had spoken. 2 For Sarah conceived and bore 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 who was born to him--whom Sarah bore to him--Isaac.

God is faithful to accomplish His plan in His time.

God gave Abraham and Sarah a son “As He had said . . . As He had spoken” (21:1, 2).

We must always remember that God is always true to His word. If God said it - that settles is.

We can depend on God and His word.

We can take security in God and His word.

In these first two verses the timing of God is mentioned.

You see, God has a plan and He will bring it to pass in His time.

It was 25 years between the promise and the deliverance –

Twenty five years where Abraham's faith was tested, as we saw last week – he did experience many failures.

But that period of waiting was crucial in the eyes of the Lord.

Isaac was not going to be born until God saw it as His perfect time.

That is sometimes hard for us to deal with.

You see, we are inherently impatient. It often seems to us as if God is moving too slowly.

You see, we are very limited. We tend to see things in the now-

However, we don't see all of the variables, the networking of circumstances required to bring God's grand plans into being.

However, we must also understand that God is not limited by time.

And so what is just the right timing for God is often too long a wait for us.

Many times, believers question why Jesus Christ hasn't returned. Two Thousand years after He said He was.

However, we must remember that the only reason that He hasn't returned is because of grace and because it is not perfect time for His return.

Now, Isaac in scripture becomes a picture or a shadow of Jesus Christ in the Old Testament.

- Both were specially promised sons.
- Both conceptions were miraculous.
- Both mothers were given assurance by truth of God's omnipotence

When Sarah laughed from behind the tent wall – the Lord's response was "is anything too hard for the Lord?"

And to Mary after she asks how is it that she can conceive if she hasn't known a man, the angel responds with [Luke 1:37 NKJV] 37 "For with God nothing will be impossible."

- Both were given names rich with meaning before they were born.

Isaac – God instructed Abraham to name him laughter

Jesus – an angel of the Lord speaking to Joseph

[Matthew 1:21-23 NKJV] 21 "And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins." 22 So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying: 23 "Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel," which is translated, "God with us."

· Both births occurred at God's appointed time (Genesis 21:2; Galatians 4:4).

[Galatians 4:4 NKJV] 4 But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law,

[Genesis 21:4-8 NKJV] 4 Then Abraham circumcised his son Isaac when **he was eight days old, as God had commanded him. 5 Now Abraham was one hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him. 6 And Sarah said, "God has made me laugh, [and] all who hear will laugh with me." 7 She also said, "Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? For I have borne [him] a**

son in his old age." 8 So the child grew and was weaned. And Abraham made a great feast on the same day that Isaac was weaned.

Abraham here in verse four, is obedient to the command that God had given him back in Genesis 17.

That all the male children were to be circumcised on the 8th day.

When God commanded him to do this, Abraham circumcised himself at the age of ninety nine years old and he then proceeded to circumcise Ishmael – who was 13 at the time and all of his male servants.

However, Isaac is the first person to be circumcised at eight days old – just as God commanded.

Now, in verse five, once again the Holy Spirit inspires Moses to remind us of the age of Abraham.

And I believe that the reasons that Abraham and Sarah's ages are repeated here in scripture is to point out that it was God's work all along.

God waited until there was no doubt that the birth of Isaac was all God's doing.

Not only does Sarah have a child at the age of ninety but, she spends the next three years nursing Isaac as children were weaned up to the age of 3-4 back then.

When Isaac was weaned and moved to solid food, Abraham threw a party as this would mark a new phase of Isaac's life.

He would now start moving out from under his mother's skirt into the role of being a man.

Now, the focus of attention at this feast would of course be the little boy who would sit with the men for the first time.

However, there is a problem that happens in almost every households with multiple children and that is the start of a sibling rivalry.

Ishmael was 17 now.

Up to the time he was 14, he was the one that was getting all the attention.

He was the one that was throwing the football with his old man – who actually was an old man.

Ishmael was the one that was going with his father into the fields as Isaac stayed back home with Sarah.

Ishmael sees the writing on the wall now.

He senses that Isaac is going to be the one that is going to be taking dad's attention and he doesn't like it.

So let's see what happens.

[Genesis 21:9-13 NKJV] 9 And Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had borne to Abraham, scoffing. 10 Therefore she said to Abraham, "Cast out this bondwoman and her son; for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, [namely] with Isaac." 11 And the matter was very displeasing in Abraham's sight because of his son. 12 But God said to Abraham, "Do not let it be displeasing in your sight because of the lad or because of your bondwoman.

Whatever Sarah has said to you, listen to her voice; for in Isaac your seed shall be called. 13 "Yet I will also make a nation of the son of the bondwoman, because he [is] your seed."

One of the things that I noticed as I was doing the study was the absence of the name of Ishmael in this entire text.

So verse nine says that Sarah finds Ishmael scoffing at Isaac.

Sarah sees Ishmael's mocking and the meanness in his disdain and realizes that real trouble is brewing.

You see, Ishmael's countenance isn't simply that of a child who is making fun – there's genuine hatred there – Sarah can see disaster looming and tells Abraham something drastic has to be done.

Of course, this upsets Abraham as Ishmael was his son.

"Cast out this bondwoman and her son; for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, [namely] with Isaac."

Now, this had happened before.

When Hagar had gotten pregnant with Ishmael, Sarah went to Abraham and Abraham simply told her to do to her as she pleased.

Hagar left and then she returned when the angel of the Lord told her to return.

Here God tells Abraham to listen his wife's counsel; because she was right.

Ishmael had to be banished because he was not to partake of the promise of God to Abraham.

He was not to be an heir of all that God had bestowed on him.

God had a separate promise for Ishmael – but it was not a part of the promise God had made to Abraham and his descendants through Isaac.

Turn with me to the book of Galatians,

[Galatians 4:21-30 NKJV] 21 Tell me, you who desire to be under the law, do you not hear the law? 22 For it is written that Abraham had two

sons: the one by a bondwoman, the other by a freewoman. 23 But he [who was] of the bondwoman was born according to the flesh, and he of the freewoman through promise, 24 which things are symbolic. For these are the two covenants: the one from Mount Sinai which gives birth to bondage, which is Hagar-- 25 for this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and corresponds to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children-- 26 but the Jerusalem above is free, which is the mother of us all. 27 For it is written: "Rejoice, O barren, [You] who do not bear! Break forth and shout, You who are not in labor! For the desolate has many more children Than she who has a husband." 28 Now we, brethren, as Isaac [was], are children of promise. 29 But, as he who was born according to the flesh then persecuted him [who was born] according to the Spirit, even so [it is] now. 30 Nevertheless what does the Scripture say? "Cast out the bondwoman and her son, for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman."

Paul says that Abraham's banishment of Hagar and Ishmael is more than a historical event – it's part of God's plan to teach us just how radically we

must deal with the flesh and with any thought that we can find a place of acceptance before God on the basis of our own strength.

Our place and acceptance before the Lord is solely and only the result of His doing, His faithfulness

[Genesis 21:14-21 NKJV] 14 So Abraham rose early in the morning, and took bread and a skin of water; and putting [it] on her shoulder, he gave [it] and the boy to Hagar, and sent her away. Then she departed and wandered in the Wilderness of Beersheba. 15 And the water in the skin was used up, and she placed the boy under one of the shrubs. 16 Then she went and sat down across from [him] at a distance of about a bowshot; for she said to herself, "Let me not see the death of the boy." So she sat opposite [him], and lifted her voice and wept. 17 And God heard the voice of the lad. **Then the angel of God called to Hagar out of heaven, and said to her, "What ails you, Hagar? Fear not, for God has heard the voice of the lad where he [is]. 18 "Arise, lift up the lad and hold him with your hand, for I will make him a great nation." 19 Then God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water. And she went and filled the skin with water, and gave the lad a drink. 20 So God was with**

the lad; and he grew and dwelt in the wilderness, and became an archer. 21 He dwelt in the Wilderness of Paran; and his mother took a wife for him from the land of Egypt.

Abraham wakes up early the next morning and gives Hagar what is equivalent to a bottle of water and bread for their journey.

Notice how the scriptures states that Abraham puts in on her shoulder – Ishmael is 17 – he is not a baby.

This entire time from Genesis 12, we have been reading how wealthy Abraham was. How many herds he had.

He could have given them a donkey to carry more goods or a few lambs so that they could have enough food for their trip back to Egypt.

But he sends them on their way with bread and water.

I believe that Abraham did this because he truly trusted the Lord with the promise He had made back in verse 13, that God was going to make a nation out of Ishmael.

In verse 15, it tells us that they ran out of water and Hagar places Ishmael under one of the shrubs – once again – Ishmael is 17 years old.

So, they are both suffering from dehydration a bowshot distance from each other and God hears the cries of Hagar and in verse 19 it tells us that God opened the eyes of Hagar and she saw a well in front of her.

Now 18 years earlier when she was pregnant with Ishmael, God had promised to her that He was going to multiply his descendants.

But the hardships she's endured have eclipsed God's promise and she no longer believes them.

God reminds us here that the fulfillment of His promises are not contingent upon our circumstances.

Even when it seems all is hopeless and all that is left is to die under the desert sun – even then, God will come and make good on ALL HIS WORD.

[Genesis 21:22-34 NKJV] 22 And it came to pass at that time that Abimelech and Phichol, the commander of his army, spoke to Abraham, saying, "God [is] with you in all that you do. 23 "Now therefore, swear to me by God that you will not deal falsely with me, with my offspring, or with my posterity; but that according to the kindness that I have done to you, you will do to me and to the land in which you have dwelt." 24 And Abraham said, "I will swear."

Now, we saw Abimelech last week. He is the King of Gerar.

He is the one that took Sarah into his harem after Abraham had stated that she was his sister.

Abraham and Sarah still live in the same land with their herds.

Now, back in those days, it was all about forming alliances.

And here in verse 22, Abimelech and Phichol realize God's presence in the life of Abraham.

Abimelech sought a treaty with Abraham because he did not ever wish to go to battle against him.

To fight Abraham was to fight against Abraham's God and to have to contend with Him. On the other hand, to have an alliance with Abraham was to have God on his side.

So Abraham agrees to the alliance but,

25 Then Abraham rebuked Abimelech because of a well of water which Abimelech's servants had seized. 26 And Abimelech said, "I do not know who has done this thing; you did not tell me, nor had I heard [of it] until today." 27 So Abraham took sheep and oxen and gave them to Abimelech, and the two of them made a covenant. 28 And Abraham set seven ewe lambs of the flock by themselves. 29 Then Abimelech asked Abraham, "What [is the meaning of] these seven ewe lambs which you have set by themselves?" 30 And he said, "You will take [these] seven ewe lambs from my hand, that they may be my witness that I have dug this well." 31 Therefore he called that place Beersheba, because the

two of them swore an oath there. 32 Thus they made a covenant at Beersheba. So Abimelech rose with Phichol, the commander of his army, and they returned to the land of the Philistines. 33 Then [Abraham] planted a tamarisk tree in Beersheba, and there called on the name of the LORD, the Everlasting God. 34 And Abraham stayed in the land of the Philistines many days.

So once the alliance is formed, Abraham proceeds to rebuke Abimelech for his guys taking away some of the wells that Abraham's guys had.

Abimelech doesn't know anything about this – maybe because Abraham was still saving face over what happened in chapter 20.

So they go ahead make a covenant.

I had told you guys that a covenant was a contract and they would cut up the animals in half and hold hands and walk in the midst of the carcasses – as a sign of saying, if you dishonor this contract – you will be like the carcasses.

Not only does he make a covenant with Abimelech – he also gives to him seven lambs that would be living reminders of the covenant that just made.

In verse 31, Abraham names this place Beersheba

This will become an important place for the children of Israel as we will see Isaac and Jacob and others to this one place.

Planting the tree was evidence of his intent to stay there and to make Beersheba one of the places his family would return again and again.

There is precious little shade in this desert region so the tree would grow and over the years provide shade for the camp.

So planting this tree was an act of faith, as it would take many years for the tree to grow into a shade tree. Especially the slow growing tamarisk tree.

It is a wonderful example of our faith as it matures in the promises of God.

As we wait for His deliverance.

Amen...

Let's pray...