

Abraham—Genesis 20-21

Birth of Isaac

I. Additional Scriptures/Notes...

20:2... SHE IS MY SISTER—“This was not merely the second offense of Abraham after this manner, but it was just another outcropping of what had been a regular procedure by him and Sarah throughout the many years of their wanderings, as indicated by Gen. 20:13. The inference may easily be made that this device, wicked and sinful thought that it was, had been employed frequently, and that most of the times, they had found it to be effective. Certain special circumstances resulted in the utmost embarrassment to them, both in Egypt, and here. In fact, the most obvious reason why Abraham resorted to this subterfuge again would seem to lie in the fact that the special circumstances, present twenty years previously in the episode with Pharaoh, no longer prevailed. Sarah, at the time of this event was 90 years old, and her beauty had probably long since disappeared. The additional factor that led to the trouble here was most likely the intention of Abimelech to use the marriage device as a means of political and military strengthening of his little kingdom. The most practical way, according to the custom of the times, to unite himself with a powerful nomadic chieftain such as Abraham, was to marry into his family” [Coffman]. ||| “This whole chapter deals with another incident in the lives of Abraham and Sarah in which Sarah was represented by both of them as being the sister of Abraham and not his wife. It appears here that this subterfuge was a definite characteristic of the modus operandi adopted by the patriarch as a maneuver which both of them doubtless considered to be a protective device, designed to prevent Abraham from being killed by someone who coveted his beautiful wife. From the human standpoint, it worked. Furthermore, it was one of the factors contributing to Abraham's tremendous wealth. It should be noted, however, that the special providence of God's intervention was required in each of the Biblical incidents in order to prevent frustration of the divine purpose regarding the seed of Abraham (and Sarah). That Abraham was wrong in both these episodes is certain. It also appears as a possibility that there might have been some question of whether or not Abraham would continue in God's way until the fruition of the glorious promises concerning him. Certainly, Abraham appears here as one falling short of what God expected of him. It should also be noted that this passing his wife off as his sister was something deliberately planned by them from the very first, leaving the possibility of numerous other instances of this not reported in the Bible. The greatest significance should be attached to the interference God interposed in order to protect the vehicles through whom the promise for all mankind would be realized.” [Coffman].

20:17... AND GOD HEALED ABIMELECH—“We are not told the nature of the illness with which God had afflicted the household of Abimelech, but Willis' comment is excellent: ‘God had smitten him with a serious disease which prevented him (and all the afflicted) from having sexual relations’” [Coffman].

21:2... SARAH CONCEIVED AND BARE ABRAHAM A SON IN HIS OLD AGE—“All of the happiness that should have come to Abraham and Sarah with the birth of this long-awaited son, however, did not come. The terrible evils of polygamy, and the tangled affairs of their domestic life, resulted almost at once in jealousy, strife, enmity, and

division. The climax came on the occasion of the feast given to celebrate the weaning of Isaac” [Coffman].

II. Chronology.

BIBLE PERIOD: **Patriarchy.**

III. Summary.

These two chapters cover some very significant events in the lives of Abraham and Sarah. Once again we read about problems that came to Abraham as a result of not telling the truth about his relationship to Sarah. Telling people that he was Sarah’s brother was their common practice as they went from place to place (20:13). The plan was their own plan and not the will of the Lord. Without the providential intervention of the Lord in two instances, disaster would have resulted from the scheme. The incident with Abimelech resulted in more gifts to Abraham, the opportunity freely to graze in the territory, and Abraham prayed for Abimelech that the Lord would heal Abimelech, his wife, and maidservants and they were then able to bear children. Chapter 21 records the birth of Isaac. It also records problems that came into the household because of Hagar and Ishmael. Sarah sends Hagar and Ishmael away and God protects Ishmael as He promised Abraham.

IV. Outline.

1. Abimelech, King of Gerar, takes Sarah and the Lord intervenes (Gen 20:1-8).
2. Abimelech confronts Abraham for his lie (Gen 20:9-13).
3. Abimelech gives gifts to Abraham and allows him to dwell in the land (Gen 20:14-16).
4. Abraham prays for Abimelech and his household is healed (Gen 20:17-18).
5. Isaac is born just as the Lord had promised (Gen 21:1-3).
6. Isaac is circumcised on the eighth day (Gen 21:4-5).
7. Conflict in Abraham’s leads to Ishmael and Hagar being cast out (Gen 21:6-11).
8. The Lord comforts Abraham (Gen 21:12-13).
9. The Lord provides for Hagar and Ishmael (Gen 21:14-21).
10. A covenant is made between Abraham and Abimelech (Gen 21:22-34).

V. Questions.

True or False

01. _____ Abraham had conflict with Abimelech’s servants over water rights.
02. _____ Abraham had only called Sarah his sister once before this chapter.
03. _____ Isaac was circumcised at the age of 13.
04. _____ Abraham prayed for Abimelech.
05. _____ The Lord promised to make of Ishmael a great nation.

Multiple Choice (Select the BEST Answer)

06. _____ With how many ewe lambs did Abraham purchase water rights from Abimelech: (a) fifty; (b) twenty; (c) seven.
07. _____ Hagar went off a bowshot distance from Ishmael because: (a) she did not love the child; (b) he was hunting; (c) she did not want to see him die of thirst.
08. _____ Did it bother Abraham that Sarah wanted to cast out Hagar and Ishmael: (a) YES; (b) NO.
09. _____ Was Abimelech a man of integrity: (a) YES; (b) NO.
10. _____ Abraham explained to Abimelech that he thought this was missing in the land: (a) fear of the Lord; (b) enough water; (c) vineyards and olive trees.

Fill in the Blanks

11. God came to Abimelech in ____ _____.
12. “And Abimelech took _____ and _____, and menservants, and womenservants, and _____ them unto Abraham, and _____ him Sarah his wife.”
13. Sarah bore a son at the _____ _____ of which God had spoken.
14. Of Ishmael, it is said: “God was _____ the lad; and he _____, and dwelt in the wilderness and became an _____.”
15. Abraham planted a grove in _____.

Each Question is worth 7 Points

My Score is: _____

Answers will be found on next week's handout

ANSWERS to Lesson 02-126... [01—True, Gen 18:24-32; 02—True, Gen 18:12, 15; 03—True, Gen 18:14; 04—True, Gen 18:27; 05—True, Gen 18:15; 06—b, Gen 18:33; 07—c, Gen 18:9; 08—a, Gen 18:20; 09—d, Gen 18:1-9; 10—a, Gen 18:13-15; 11—righteous, wicked, Gen 18:23; 12—dust, ashes, Gen 18:27; 13—ran, herd, hastened, Gen 18:6; 14—50, 45, 40, 30, 20, 10, Gen 18:26-32; 15—heat, day, Gen 18:1.]

VI. Lessons & Applications.

1. **And Abraham said of Sarah his wife, she is my sister...** (Gen 20:2). We might think that Abraham would have learned from the incident in Egypt (Gen 12:13ff), however he did not seem to have learned. In fact, we learn from this chapter that this was Abraham's customary practice as he traveled (v. 13). What Abraham did is **WRONG**, there is no excuse for it. It may help us to realize that the reason God selected Abraham as the one through whom He would bless all the families of the earth was **NOT** because Abraham was sinless and deserved such a blessing!
2. **...I also withheld thee from sinning against me: therefore suffered I thee not to touch her** (Gen 20:6). The providential intervention of the Lord is what prevented a great tragedy from coming out of the lie that Abraham and Sarah told Abimelech! The great Scheme of Redemption is being unfolded before us as we observe how the Lord causes His promise to Abraham to be kept.
3. **...Behold, my land is before thee: dwell where it pleaseth thee** (Gen 20:15). Some try to take the Genesis 12 account in Egypt and say that the Bible is mistakenly repeating what had happened earlier. Such is not the case! There were many **DIFFERENCES** between that incident and this one. Not the least of which is that here Abraham is invited to stay in the land, whereas the king of Egypt expelled him from his land.
4. **And the Lord visited Sarah as he had said, and the Lord did unto Sarah as he had spoken** (Gen 21:1). The wording here is very clear and concise. There was absolutely no need for Sarah to have doubted God's promise. There was certainly no need for her to have attempted to “help” God by providing her handmaid to her husband.
5. **...Cast out this bondwoman...** (Gen 21:10). We can see in this discussion how much the Old and New Testaments are inter-related. The Apostle Paul made an allegory based upon these very words in Galatians 4:21-31.
6. **And the thing was very grievous in Abraham's sight because of his son** (Gen 21:11). The results of getting away from the Genesis 2 pattern of one man and one woman brought grief into the life of this great patriarch!

Teacher: David Lemmons

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VII. Seek-A-Word Puzzle.

P O I U Y C O N C E I V E D T R E W Q A
 Z S X S W E D C S E T T I M E V F R E T
 T G O B G T Y H N M J U I K L O P Y R B
 G T R N F V C D E W S X Z A Q W S X A C
 V F R T G B N H Y U J M K I O L U Y B R
 E D C C O M M A N D E D C D E H R F V G
 T E Y H N M J U I R E E D N C U Q A Z X
 T I X S W E D C V S R F E B G N T Y H N
 J G B G T Y H N I M J K U I O D T G B V
 V H F R E D C C Q A O Z A Q W R V F E R
 B T G T Y H M N H P B G T R F E V G E D
 C D V F R U T G S N H Y U J M D A R F V
 C A E W C X C D V F R T G B U D Y T R E
 C Y V R F R A V F I V F D R L T G B M N
 T S I W S H X S H F S E R O T G B A N H
 Y C X S E W E A C D T A E R F V H B G T
 N H Y H N H R Y H I M J A U I A V F R Q
 A Z S X S A W E S C D E R C R V F R T G
 B A G T S B G I E D C V F B V F R T G B
 N H Y U J M V O P U J M A B G T E D R L

[The highlighted words can be found above. They may be backwards, diagonal, upside down, etc. See if you can find them all. The more you use the words of the Bible, the greater blessed you will be! You might be surprised at how much this little exercise will help you retain important truths. THANK YOU for the good effort you are putting forth in Bible study. DRL]

Genesis 21:1-5... ¹And the LORD **visited Sarah** as he had said, and the LORD did unto Sarah **as he had spoken**. ²For Sarah **conceived**, and **bare Abraham** a **son** in his **old age**, at the **set time** of which God had spoken to him. ³And Abraham called the name of his son that was born unto him, whom Sarah bare to him, **Isaac**. ⁴And Abraham **circumcised** his son Isaac being **eight days** old, as God had **commanded** him. ⁵And Abraham was an **hundred** years old, when his son Isaac was born unto him.