

SAPC Wednesday Bible Study

Genesis 21:1-21

1 April 2020

The Narrative so far: (Recap)

Gen 1-11

Moses told us 'In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth'.

Then come the fall of Adam and Eve. They were banished from the garden of Eden; sin and death entered the world (Romans 5).

Later God decided to flood the whole earth, saving only Noah and his family. Noah is the 10th generation from Adam (Seth line). This was the first covenant God made, at the same time God's judgement for the wicked.

Note in Gen 8:21, we are told "every inclination of the human heart is evil from childhood". We were not saved (eternally) by the flood or by Noah's righteousness.

Only God's grace allowed Noah's sons Shem, Ham and Japheth to multiply and fill the earth.

Abram is the 10th generations from Noah's son Shem. We are now in the Patriarchal History of Genesis (From Gen 11:10).

The Abraham Covenant

The LORD called Abram in Genesis 12, "Go from your country, your people and your father's household to the land I will show you.

I will **make you into a great nation**,
and I will bless you;
I will make your name great,
and you will be a blessing.
I will bless those who bless you,
and whoever curses you I will curse;
and **all peoples on earth**
will be blessed through you."

*(NT Hebrews 11:8 tells us **BY FAITH**, Abram obeyed this call;*

*And Romans 4:11 tells us Abram had **FAITH** while he was still uncircumcised)*

Abram asked God in Gen:15 if his servant will be heir and God made clear His **3 promises**:

⁴ Then the word of the LORD came to him: "This man will not be your heir, **but a son who is your own flesh and blood will be your heir.**" ⁵ He took him outside and said, "Look up at the sky and count the stars —**if indeed you can count them.**" Then he said to him, "So shall **your offspring be.**" ⁶ **Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness.**
⁷ He also said to him, "I am the LORD, who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans to **give you this land to take possession** of it."

In Genesis 16, Sarai convinced Abram to have a child with her Egyptian slave, Hagar.

In Genesis 17, When Abram is 99 years old, God changed Abram's and Sarai's names, and reiterated the 3 promises:

“will greatly increase your numbers.” “will be the father of many nations.”

“The whole land of Canaan, where you now reside as a foreigner, I will give as an everlasting possession to you and your descendants after you.”

“I will bless her and will surely give you a son by her. I will bless her so that she will be the mother of nations; kings of peoples will come from her.”

Abram and all his descendants would agree to circumcision as a symbol of this everlasting covenant.

Isaac and Ishmael foretold

God spelt out the details and timing in Genesis 17:19-21

¹⁹ Then God said, “Yes, but your wife Sarah will bear you a son, and you will call him Isaac. I will establish my covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his descendants after him. ²⁰ And **as for Ishmael, I have heard you: I will surely bless him**; I will make him fruitful and will greatly increase his numbers. He will be the father of twelve rulers, and I will make him into a great nation. ²¹ **But my covenant I will establish with Isaac, whom Sarah will bear to you by this time next year.**”

Our study passage tonight:

Genesis 21:1-21 (NIV)

¹ Now the LORD was gracious to Sarah as he had said, and the LORD did for Sarah what he had promised. ² Sarah became pregnant and bore a son to Abraham in his old age, at the very time God had promised him. ³ Abraham gave the name Isaac to the son Sarah bore him. ⁴ When his son Isaac was eight days old, Abraham circumcised him, as God commanded him. ⁵ Abraham was a hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him. ⁶ Sarah said, “God has brought me laughter, and everyone who hears about this will laugh with me.” ⁷ And she added, “Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? Yet I have borne him a son in his old age.”

⁸ The child grew and was weaned, and on the day Isaac was weaned Abraham held a great feast. ⁹ But Sarah saw that the son whom Hagar the Egyptian had borne to Abraham was mocking, ¹⁰ and she said to Abraham, “Get rid of that slave woman and her son, for that woman's son will never share in the inheritance with my son Isaac.”

¹¹ The matter distressed Abraham greatly because it concerned his son. ¹² But God said to him, “Do not be so distressed about the boy and your slave woman. Listen to whatever Sarah tells you, because it is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned. ¹³ I will make the son of the slave into a nation also, because he is your offspring.”

¹⁴ Early the next morning Abraham took some food and a skin of water and gave them to Hagar. He set them on her shoulders and then sent her off with the boy. She went on her way and wandered in the Desert of Beersheba.

¹⁵ When the water in the skin was gone, she put the boy under one of the bushes. ¹⁶ Then she went off and sat down about a bowshot away, for she thought, “I cannot watch the boy die.” And as she sat there, she began to sob.

¹⁷ God heard the boy crying, and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven and said to her, “What is the matter, Hagar? Do not be afraid; God has heard the boy crying as he lies there. ¹⁸ Lift the boy up and take him by the hand, for I will make him into a great nation.”

¹⁹ Then God opened her eyes and she saw a well of water. So she went and filled the skin with water and gave the boy a drink.

²⁰ God was with the boy as he grew up. He lived in the desert and became an archer. ²¹ While he was living in the Desert of Paran, his mother got a wife for him from Egypt.

Focusing on God in this narrative, 3 main points:

V1-7: God is Sovereign, Promise fulfilled exactly at His said timing

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.*** (NKJV Genesis 21:1-2)

Moses wrote about the patriarch and their ancestors perpetual fallen nature despite God’s reassurance and deliverance. Abraham and Sarah laughed (Disbelief & Joy when finally came true) in Gen 18:12-13, Gen 17:17 and Gen 21:6

V8-13: God reiterated His everlasting covenant is through Isaac only, His chosen one.

¹⁸ *And Abraham said to God, “If only Ishmael might live under your blessing!”* (Gen 17:18)

God knew Abraham has a soft spot for Ishmael, his first born. He reassured Abraham of Ismael’s blessing and instructed him to follow Sarah’s advice.

V14-21: God is merciful and kept His promise, for Ishmael is still Abraham’s offspring.

God interceded when Hagar and Ishmael were lost and in dire straits. The Angel reassured Hagar God’s promise for Ishmael.

One Liner:

1. Abraham grew mature in his faith, Isaac was born as God promised and Ishmael was also blessed.
2. Through Sarah God continued His promise of the chosen people to Abraham through the birth of Isaac but He didn't forget Ishmael.
3. God is faithful to His promise.
4. The pain and joy of a father and yet he is faithful.
5. Abraham trust in God's will and have strong faith.
6. God is the master planner and Abraham obeyed.
7. God's timing is as promised, while God's favour is with Isaac, He is gracious to Ishmael.
8. Abraham faithfully follow God's instruction.
9. God keeps His promise and He cares about who/ what we care about.
10. God's promise is not only certain but precise, yet He has grace for those outside His promise.
11. God carried out His promise of giving Isaac to Abraham as per covenant, and he also blessed Ishmael who is also an offspring of Abraham.

APPLICATION

Abraham's faith grew as he obeyed God's command and received God's blessings. **This is the way God prepares us.** Unless we trust Him every time and wait on His timing, we do not have true faith. The OT has given us many 'Faith Journey' of God's chosen people.

Nehemiah 9:7 and Acts 7:2–3 said God called Abram from Ur of the Chaldeans (Babylon), demonstrating **God's saving grace can extend to sinners, the idols worshippers.**

Abram responded with faith when he believed and obeyed, at the age of 75. **Never too late.**

But he still stumbled many times, schemed and almost lost Sarah his wife twice. He had his first son with Hagar instead of Sarah. But God's covenant is **a covenant of Grace.**

God knew all of us, our **born sinful** nature, our perpetual struggle and weakness. We **can only count on Him** to bestow us with **righteousness**, strength, wisdom and talents.

God fulfils His promise to us who heed His call and **walk in faith (Action not just Belief).**

And **only in His timing.**

Our response to Jesus Christ, our Lord according to 2 Peter 1:3-11

³ His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness.

¹⁰ Therefore, my brothers and sisters, make every effort to confirm your calling and election. For if you do these things, you will never stumble, (2 Peter 1:10 NIV)

Further Study: Paul's Interpretation in NT

In NT, Paul used Abraham Covenant to argue for the **doctrine of justification by faith**.

'The two women of Abraham may be interpreted allegorically of two covenants.' (Gal 4:24)

In Galatians 4:21-31, Paul compared Ishmael and Isaac to the group of people (those who follow Orthodox teaching in Jerusalem) enslaved by the law (Received the Law at Mount Sinai) and the group of 'Reformed' Jews and Gentiles who are the children of God's promise.

For Ishmael is born of the flesh and Isaac is born of God's promise. Paul wanted the Galatians to see the law / works as bondage; only faith in Christ (the promise of God) will set them free / saved.

In Romans 9: God's Sovereign Choice, Not by Inheritance

In other words, it is not the children by physical descent who are God's children, but it is the children of the promise who are regarded as Abraham's offspring. V8 (NIV)

What then shall we say? Is God unjust? Not at all! For he says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion."

It does not, therefore, depend on human desire or effort, but on God's mercy. V14-16 (NIV)

Moses in Exodus 33:19

And the LORD said, "I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim my name, the LORD, in your presence. I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.

Further read: Habakkuk