

Bi121 Old Testament

Lesson Bi121-8 Ishmael and Isaac (Gen 13, 16-18)

In the previous lesson you learned that Abram was not only rich but that he also received great promises from God. Abram left Egypt and returned to Canaan, the land of the promise. The trip was quite an adventure. In many places he built altars to worship God. He had everything a man could want, except he had no children. When would God fulfill that part of His promise? Abram believed everything God told him. This pleased God so much that He repeated His promise to give Abram as many descendants as there were stars in the sky. God said that Abram's faith made him righteous in God's sight. But still, he had no son.

Abram and his nephew Lot had been traveling together, but their herds were growing larger and larger. There was not enough water and grass in any one place for so many animals and the herdsmen quarreled. Finally, Abram and Lot decided to go their separate ways. Lot chose the well-watered plain of the Jordan River to the east, while Abram stayed in the hill country of Canaan. Lot moved his tents close to the wicked city of Sodom. His Uncle Abram moved to the town of Hebron and built another altar to the Lord.

About 10 years later, Sarai becomes concerned that she has not yet had a child like the Lord has promised. There was a tradition among their people that if a woman could not conceive then she could give her maidservant to her husband as a surrogate. Any child that was born to the maidservant would be considered hers. Thus, having born no children of her own, Sarai took her maidservant Hagar and gave her to Abram to be his concubine and to begin their family. As soon as Hagar became pregnant, she despised Sarai. This made Sarai angry, so she began mistreating her. Finally Hagar could stand it no longer and she ran away. She became very weary and found a place to rest by a spring of water. Suddenly, the Angel of the Lord appeared and asked, "Hagar, where are you going?"

"I am running away from my mistress Sarai."

"Go back and submit to Sarai, for the Lord has heard your misery. You will have a son, and you shall name him Ishmael. He will live in hostility toward all his brothers, but I will give you so many descendants that you will not be able to count them" (Gen 16:10).

Hagar was amazed at this and said, "I have seen the God who sees me." So she names the place, "The Well of the Living One Who Sees Me." God had come to speak with her in the form of an angel! So Hagar went back to Sarai and bore a son to Abram. He named the child Ishmael, which means "God Hears." Now Abram was 86 years old when Ishmael is born.

Thirteen years later, when Abram was 99 years old, the Lord appeared to him and said, "I am El Shaddai, God Almighty. I will confirm my covenant between me and you and will greatly increase your numbers. Some of your descendants will be kings! Therefore I am changing your name from Abram to Abraham, which means the 'father of many nations.' I will be with you and I will give this land to you and your descendants after you. As a sign of this covenant, you

are to circumcise every male among you.” So Abraham, his 13-year-old son Ishmael, and all the males in his household were circumcised that very day (Gen 17:26).

The Lord also said to him, “From now on, your wife’s name will not be Sarai, but will be Sarah. I will bless her, and she will bear you a son. She will be the mother of nations!” Abraham laughed and said, “How is it possible for a man who is a hundred years old and a woman who is ninety years old to have a child? If only Ishmael might live under your blessing.”

“Sarah will bear you a son and you will call him Isaac.” God said. “I will establish my covenant with him and his descendants after him and I will be their God. The whole earth will be blessed because of them. I will bless Ishmael as well. I will make him a great nation; twelve rulers will come from him.” When God finishes speaking with Abraham, He left him.

Sometime later, Abraham was sitting at the entrance to his tent when he looked up and saw three men standing nearby. He hurried over to meet them and bowed to the ground. “Sirs, please, come and sit under this tree. Let me give you some water so you can wash your feet and give you something to eat. Then you can be refreshed and continue on your way.”

They replied, “Very well, do as you say.” Abraham hurried into the tent and asked Sarah to make some bread. He went to the field and selected a choice calf for his servants to prepare a meal. Soon the food was ready, and Abraham served his guests. Then he stood back and watched them eat. These were no ordinary men for Abraham sensed that one of them was God appearing in human form and the other two were angels in human form. The writer of Genesis often refers to this manifestation of deity as the angel of God, the angel of the Lord, or just the Lord.

So as they ate, the Lord said to Abraham, “Where is Sarah, your wife?”

“She is in the tent,” Abraham answered.

Then He said, “I will come back in about a year and Sarah will have given birth to a son.” Sarah was listening to this from inside the tent. She was 89 years old, so she laughed inside herself when she heard that she was going to give birth to a son. She thought, “That is impossible. I am too old to give birth to a child.”

The Lord asked Abraham, “Why did Sarah laugh? Is anything too hard for the Lord? I WILL come back, and she WILL give birth to a child!”

When Sarah heard this, she was afraid, “I did not laugh!”

But He said, “Yes, you DID laugh!”

Within the year Sarah found that she was expecting a child and that God's word was indeed true.

This story is important because it illustrates that God controls the times and events in the lives of believers. God has a plan for each one and also a time table to accomplish His will. Some events may seem impossible, but nothing is too hard for God.

The main truth of this story is that God is able to fulfill the promises He makes to believers in His Word.

To review this lesson, answer these questions.

1. What problem did Sarai try to solve for God?
 - a. [Pause for 6 seconds.] If you said, “Sarai said, ‘I still have not yet had a child’,” you are correct.
2. Which son was to receive God’s promises given to Abraham?
 - a. [Pause for 6 seconds.] If you said, “God said, ‘I will give my promises to Isaac and his descendants and I will be their God’,” you are correct.
3. What question did God ask when Sarah laughed?
 - a. [Pause for 6 seconds.] If you said, “Is anything too hard for the Lord?” you are correct.

Your assignment for this lesson is to listen to the story at least three times. As you hear the story each time, imagine how it happened; see the events in your mind. Then tell the story in your own words as you remember it. Then listen to the story again and retell it until you feel sure you are repeating the circumstances and actions correctly. You should spend at least 45 minutes in learning the story. You may need to have someone check that you are telling the story correctly.

Finally, go tell this story to a friend who has never heard it before. Ask your friend if they believe that miracles are still possible today? If they say miracles are not possible, ask if God has changed. Then tell them the biblical story of the birth of Isaac to elderly parents. Then ask them again if they believe in miracles.