



Genesis 21-22

"And the LORD visited Sarah as He had said, and the LORD did unto Sarah as He had spoken." (Gen.21:1). That's so much like God. He did what He said He would do.

God had promised Abraham that through Sarah would his seed be called. Sarah was past the age of bearing children and Abraham was a hundred years old. His own body was dead and Sarah's womb was dead; yet, God promised that through Sarah, Abraham's seed would be called. About a year earlier the LORD said to Abraham, "...Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed; and thou shalt call his name Isaac; and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his seed after him. And as for Ishmael, I have heard thee; Behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly; twelve princes shall he beget, and I will make him a great nation, But my covenant will I establish with Isaac, which Sarah shall bear unto thee at this set time in the next year." (Gen.17:19-21).

"For Sarah conceived, and bare Abraham a son in his old age, at the set time of which God had spoken to him." (Gen.21:2). So, God brought to pass what He had told Abraham He would do. With God, there is a "set time" for all things. God deals with the eternal and so has all kind of patience waiting for that "set time." We deal with the temporal and so, we have problems waiting for God's "set time." We, so often, try to speed up God's clock and hasten His program. We try to do things before God's "set time" and that is always a mistake. We jump ahead and move before God moves.

"And Abraham called the name of his son that was born unto him, whom Sarah bare to him, Isaac." (Gen.21:3). Isaac means, "laughter." When God told Abraham he was going to give him a son when he was a hundred years old; Abraham laughed for joy. Being strong in the faith, he gave glory to God. The laughter of Abraham was the laughter of joy. Later on when the LORD was talking to Abraham, in his tent, Sarah was eavesdropping when He told him that Sarah would bear him a son and she laughed. Her laugh was one of incredulity. Because hers was a laugh of disbelief the angel rebuked her. They both laughed at the prospect of having a son, so the LORD said that his name shall be called Isaac or "laughter." Isaac brought much joy and laughter to his parents and was a blessing to them.

"And Abraham circumcised his son Isaac being eight days old, as God had commanded him." (Gen.21:4) When he was eight days old, Isaac was circumcised that he might become one of the covenant people with God. Circumcision was according to the commandment of God when He made the Abrahamic Covenant.

"And Abraham was an hundred years old, when his son Isaac was born unto him. And Sarah said, God hath made me to laugh, so that all that hear will laugh with me. And she said, Who would have said unto Abraham, that Sarah should have given children suck? for I have born him a son in his old age." (Gen.21:5-7). God really restored Sarah, not only was she able to have Isaac, but she was able to nurse him. At ninety years old she was nursing her child. The LORD rejuvenated Abraham also as he was a hundred and thirty-seven years old when Sarah died and after this he married Keturah and had six other children by her.

"And the child grew, and was weaned; and Abraham made a great feast the same day that Isaac was weaned." (Gen.21:8). Children were usually weaned at the age of two or three years old. "And Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, which she had born unto Abraham, mocking." (Gen.21:9). Ishmael was thirteen when Isaac was born, so he was about fifteen or sixteen at the time of the weaning celebration. Sarah saw this teenage son of Hagar, laughing or scoffing.

No doubt Ishmael felt jealousy for this other son, Isaac, that was born. He had the attention and love of his father for thirteen years and though Sarah always had a hard time with him; he was Abraham's son and was loved by Abraham. Suddenly there is another little boy that is called, "laughter." All the attention is on him and Ishmael is being pushed aside, so he is scoffing at the whole situation.

"Wherefore she said unto Abraham, cast out this bondwoman and her son; for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, even with Isaac. And the thing was very grievous in Abraham's sight because of his son. And God said unto Abraham, let it not be grievous in thy sight because of the lad, and because of thy bondwoman; in all that Sarah hath said unto thee, hearken unto her voice; for in Isaac shall thy seed be called." (Gen.21:10-12).

Abraham had listened to the voice of Sarah and that was the reason that Ishmael now existed. God promised to give to Abraham "seed" as the stars of heaven and Abraham believed God. The very next thing that happened was Sarah gave Abraham her handmaid to take as his wife and to bear a child that Sarah would take as hers. When Hagar became pregnant, there was a friction born between the two women that never left them. Hagar looked scornfully upon Sarah because she was able to conceive and Sarah could not. Sarah was despised by Hagar and the feeling became a mutual one causing friction.

This all happened because Abraham listened to Sarah. Later she got mad at him, for the child that was born, but it was her suggestion that it all took place. Now Sarah wants to cast out Hagar and Ishmael from the home and this is very grievous to Abraham until God said to listen to Sarah and do what she says.

"And also of the son of the bondwoman will I make a nation, because he is thy seed." (Gen.21:13). God promises to take care of Ishmael and make a nation out of him because he is Abraham's child.

In Galatians, the fourth chapter, Paul, the Apostle, quotes this experience of Sarah saying, "Cast out the bondwoman and her son." Paul brings an interesting kind of parallel between the child of the law and the child of the Spirit or faith. There are always those who live after the flesh and there are always those who walk after the Spirit; but, they that are after the flesh will not inherit with those who are after the Spirit. We are to live and walk after the Spirit. It is by the Spirit that we become heirs of God and the son of the bondwoman will not be an heir with the child of faith. We have a choice in our lives, whether to live after the flesh or after the Spirit.

"And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and took bread, and a bottle of water, and gave it unto Hagar, putting it on her shoulder, and the child, and sent her away; and she departed, and wandered in the wilderness of Beer-sheba." (Gen.21:14). The word wandered means that she became lost.

"And the water was spent in the bottle, and she cast the child under one of the shrubs." (Gen.21:15). Abraham, no doubt, had given her enough water to reach a place where she could get more, but, having become lost it was used up. She put the boy out of the hot sun and under a shrub to keep him in the shade.

"And she went, and sat her down over against him a good way off, as it were a bowshot; for she said, Let me not see the death of the child. And she sat over against him, and lift up her voice, and wept." (Gen.21:16).

It must have been a difficult experience for Hagar who was sort of a victim of circumstances. It was also hard on Abraham, but Sarah is insisting that Ishmael not be an heir with her son, Isaac. So, Abraham sends Hagar and Ishmael away and now Hagar is waiting for the boy to die.

"And God heard the voice of the lad; and the angel of God called to Hagar out of heaven, and said unto her, What aileth thee, Hagar? fear not; for God hath heard the voice of the lad where he is." (Gen.21:17).

Notice the angel of God called to Hagar. Up until this time we have been dealing with the angel of the LORD or Jehovah which is the covenant name of God to Israel. The word Jehovah means literally, "the becoming one." God wanting to become "all" to Israel revealed Himself as the becoming one to them that He might become to them whatever their need might be.

We have read much about the angel of the LORD and it is probably the same one, but Hagar is outside the covenant and so it is the angel of God who called to her out of heaven.

"Arise, lift up the lad, and hold him in thine hand; for I will make him a great nation, And God

opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water; and she went, and filled the bottle with water, and gave the lad drink, And God was with the lad; and he grew, and dwelt in the wilderness, and became an archer, And he dwelt in the wilderness of Paran; and his mother took him a wife out of the land of Egypt." (Gen.21:18-21). The LORD heard the cry of Ishmael and so they were saved from death and dwelt in the wilderness and Ishmael became a great nation.

"And it came to pass at that time, that Abimelech and Phichol the chief captain of his host spake unto Abraham, saying, God is with thee in all that thou doest; Now therefore swear unto me here by God that thou wilt not deal falsely with me, nor with my son, nor with my son's son; but according to the kindness that I have done unto thee, thou shalt do unto me, and to the land wherein thou hast sojourned. And Abraham said, I will swear." (Gen.21:22-24). Abimelech is the Philistine king who took Sarah into his harem when Abraham said, "She is my sister." He recognized that the hand of God was upon Abraham. He could see that God was blessing him and he had probably heard of the miracle of the birth of this child, Isaac.

Abimelech wants to make a covenant with Abraham for his children's posterity. He said, in effect, "I was kind to you, now promise to be kind to me and my sons," and Abraham swore that he would, but then Abraham took advantage of the situation to bring up a sore point between them.

"And Abraham reproveth Abimelech because of a well of water, which Abimelech's servants had violently taken away. And Abimelech said, I wot not who hath done this thing; neither didst thou tell me, neither yet heard I of it, but to day." (Gen.21:25-26). Abraham told Abimelech that the well belonged to him and had been taken from him. Abimelech said he didn't know anything about it until now.

"And Abraham took sheep and oxen, and gave them unto Abimelech; and both of them made a covenant." (Gen.21:27). Remember that Abimelech gave Abraham sheep and oxen when he returned Sarah to him and told him to pick out any place on his land to live. Now Abraham is giving some back to him.

"And Abraham set seven ewe lambs of the flock by themselves. And Abimelech said unto Abraham, What mean these seven ewe lambs which thou hast set by themselves?" (Gen.21:28-29). Abraham set seven ewe lambs aside and Abimelech said, "What in the world are you doing?" "And he said, For these seven ewe lambs shalt thou take of my hand, that they may be a witness unto me, that I have digged this well." (Gen.21:30). Anytime you look at these lambs, you will remember that Abraham dug this well.

"Wherefore he called that place Beer-sheba; because there they sware both of them." (Gen.21:31). Beer-sheba can mean "the well of oath" or "swearing" or "seven wells." Sheba is seven in Hebrew and it is also the word for oath. So "the well of swearing" or "the well of seven" or "seven wells." Both of these meanings are correct for the word Beer-sheba.

"Thus they made a covenant at Beer-sheba; then Abimelech rose up, and Phichol the chief captain of his host, and they returned into the land of the Philistines. And Abraham planted a grove in Beer-sheba, and called there on the name of the LORD, the everlasting God. And Abraham sojourned in the Philistines' land many days." (Gen.21:32-34). Abraham planted a tamarisk tree and there is a question whether it was one or a grove of trees. When you are planning to settle down in a spot, this is what people usually do. This is the first mention of the everlasting God, El Elyon.

"And it came to pass after these things..." (probably a period of twenty-five years or so after the weaning of Isaac.) "...that God did tempt..." (test) "...Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham; and he said, Behold, here I am, And He said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest..." (Gen.22:1-2a) Love is probably one of the most important words in the Bible and interestingly this is the first time it is found.

There is a study of the Bible which takes the first use of a word and usually sets a pattern for its use throughout the Bible. This is called "First Mention." When you are studying a certain word or subject, you should always go back to the first mention of the word to get some light upon its meaning. This is the first

mention of "love" and what is interesting is that it is the love of a father for his son. We hear a lot about mother love, but the first mention of love in the Bible is not about a mother for her child or a husband for his wife; but, of a father for his son.

What is the first mention of love in the New Testament? In Matthew's Gospel, we are told that when Jesus was baptized that the voice of God spoke from heaven saying, "This is my beloved son." In Mark's Gospel the first mention of love is also at the baptism of Jesus where Mark records the voice from heaven saying, "This is my beloved son." In Luke's Gospel, the first mention of love is again at the baptism of Jesus when God said, "This is my beloved son." The Synoptic Gospels all agree, but what is the first mention of love in the Gospel of John? John 3:16 says, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten son..." God's love for the world in that He gave His only son.

So, God said to Abraham, "...Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest..." God, here, does not recognize Ishmael. Ishmael was the work of the flesh and God refused to recognize him. He is not the child of promise or the work of the Spirit.

We often try to offer to God the works of our flesh and God will not accept them. So much of the endeavor for God is done in the flesh. That is one of the weaknesses of the church today. We are endeavoring, in the ability and energy of the flesh, to do the work of the Spirit. The Psalmist said, "Except the LORD build the house, they labor in vain who build it; except the LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain." (Ps.127:1). We're going to be surprised when we stand before God and our works are then tried by fire; because, so many of them will be burned. The works of the flesh will all burn. I've tried for years, in my flesh, to do the work of God and to build the church of Jesus Christ, but it was all for nothing. I spent a lot of years laboring in vain. God doesn't recognize the work of your flesh, He wants the work of the Spirit in your life.

Take your son, Isaac, whom you love, "...and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt-offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of." (Gen.22:2b). The land of Moriah was the area of Jerusalem. Abraham lived down by Beer-Sheba, about thirty miles away from Jerusalem. You could make about ten miles a day walking and so, it was about a three day journey.

"And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son, and clave the wood for the burnt-offering, and rose up, and went unto the place of which God had told him." (Gen.22:3).

The word, in the Hebrew, for young men is the same word used for "lad" in verse five, speaking of Isaac. So, Isaac was about the same age as these young men that went along with them.

"Then on the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes, and saw the place afar off." (Gen.22:4). Paul, writing to the Corinthians, speaks of the gospel that he had preached to them. He said the gospel that he had preached to them was that of Christ, who died, and was three days dead but who rose on the third day. He speaks of it like it was from the Old Testament. Now, where does the Old Testament scriptures teach that Christ died for our sins and was resurrected on the third day? As I look at the Old Testament scriptures, this must be the reference to which Paul was referring. For three days, as they journeyed, Isaac was as dead in the eyes of his father, Abraham. Nonetheless, Abraham, the whole while, was believing in the resurrection. He could not understand what was going on nor could he understand the command of God. He saw a real dilemma, God's dilemma. God had said that through Isaac would his seed be called and Isaac was not married nor did he have any children. The "seed" has to come through Isaac, but God is saying to offer him as a sacrifice and the only way this can happen is for Isaac to be resurrected. In Hebrews it says, "By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac; and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called; Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure." (Heb.11:17-19).

Abraham came within sight of the mountain on the third day. "And Abraham said unto his young men, Abide ye here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you."

(Gen.22:5). This is the first mention of worship in the Bible. Sometimes as we sing praises to God and lift our hands, we say that we have been worshipping God, but technically that is not what the Bible terms as worship. The word worship means "to bow down." It is a reference to the "bowing down" of my will to God. You can lift your hands and sing with your eyes closed, but you may be resisting God in your heart. What Abraham is really saying to these young men is, "We're going to go up to that mountain and bow down our will to God." So, Abraham declares that they're going to worship and they will come again. The word "come" here is a plural verb. We will go and we will come back again to you is what Abraham is saying. He doesn't know how they will both come back, but he believes God's promise that his seed will be called through Isaac.

"And Abraham took the wood of the burnt-offering, and laid it upon Isaac his son." (Gen.22:6a). Even as Jesus had the cross laid upon Him and He bore it toward Golgotha. "...and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife; and they went both of them together." (Gen.22:6b)

"And Isaac spake unto Abraham his father, and said, My father; and he said, Here am I, my son. And he said, Behold the fire and the wood; but where is the lamb for a burnt-offering? And Abraham said, My son, God will provide Himself a lamb for a burnt-offering; so they went both of them together." (Gen.22:7-8). Not that God will provide for Himself, as you read in the New King James translation, (a poor translation) but God will provide Himself.

This is a prophecy of Abraham concerning Jesus Christ, God the Son, who was provided as a lamb slain for our sins. "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." (I Peter 1:18-19). And John, the Baptist, cried, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." (John 1:29). Marvelous prophecy that God would provide Himself as the lamb for the burnt-offering.

"And they came to the place which God had told him of; and Abraham built an altar there, and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood." (Gen.22:9). Isaac was approximately twenty-five to thirty-three years old at this point. The next advent that we read of is the death of Sarah and Isaac was about thirty-seven when his Mother died. Surely Isaac could have overpowered his Dad, approximately one hundred and thirty years of age; but, he submitted instead.

Even as Jesus, when going to the cross, submitted to the will of the Father but could have escaped it. In the Garden, He prayed, "Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me; nevertheless not my will, but thine be done." (Luke 22:42).

When the soldiers came to arrest Him and Peter pulled out his sword, "Then said Jesus unto Peter, Put up thy sword into the sheath; the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it? (John 18:11). As He prayed in John, chapter 17, "And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." Jesus was submitting to the Father by going to the cross and Isaac was submitting to his father by being bound on the altar.

"And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son." (Gen.22:10). I imagine, at this point, that Isaac was looking up at his Dad and saw the tears rolling down Abraham's cheek. This was the hardest test, Abraham ever had. He believed that somehow God was going to bring Isaac back to life. He didn't know how, but God had promised that through Isaac would Abraham's seed be called and he believed God. It would be hard to imagine whether Isaac or Abraham suffered more. When Jesus hung on the cross, who suffered the most? We don't often think of the pain of the Father's heart when the Son was being sacrificed for our sins. I would have to say that the Father was suffering the most.

"And the angel of the LORD called unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham; and he said, Here am I. And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him; for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me." (Gen.22:11-12). James gives us a very interesting commentary on this particular passage of scripture. He declares that

Abraham believed God and it was counted to him for righteousness, but the proof that he believed God was manifested when he sacrificed his son. Thus, that work of sacrificing his son was the proof of his faith. "Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone." (James 2:17). James uses this as part of his argument that faith has to produce works that are in harmony with what you declare that you believe. The faith of Abraham was demonstrated in the fact of his willingness to offer his son.

"And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold behind him a ram caught in a thicket by his horns; and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt-offering in the stead of his son. And Abraham called the name of that place Jehovah-jireh: as it is said to this day, In the mount of the LORD it shall be seen." (Gen.22:13-14). This is another marvelous prophecy by Abraham. The mount of the LORD is Mount Moriah and today is known as the Temple Mount. In II Chronicles we read, "Then Solomon began to build the house of the LORD at Jerusalem in mount Moriah, where the LORD appeared unto David his father, in the place that David had prepared in the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite." (II Chron.3:1).

If you will take a careful look at the geography of mount Moriah, you will note that the Temple Mount is at the side of the mountain and not at the top of mount Moriah. Mount Moriah continues on a gentle slope from the Temple Mount up to the top. However, when Solomon built the temple and the walls and many of the buildings, he did it on the north side of the city where the rock is perfect for building. It lays in stratas and all they have to do is cut it. That is where they quarried the stone and so on the north side, mount Moriah has had a great chunk taken out of it. Originally at Abraham's time this stone had not been quarried and so from the temple mount, the gentle slope would have come all the way up to the top of mount Moriah which is now across some sort of valley from the wall of Jerusalem. If you stand near Herod's Gate on the top of the wall of Jerusalem, though you are standing nearly sixty feet from the ground down below, the wall is only twelve feet high, because of the bedrock. As a result of quarrying the stone, there are caves which resemble a skull. Thus the name of the place became Golgotha which means, "the Place of the Skull," or in Latin is called, "Calvary." Above the skull, Golgotha or Calvary, was originally mount Moriah and no doubt when Abraham went to the mount, he went to the top which was customary in those days when you built an altar. So, on the top of the mountain where Abraham went to sacrifice Isaac, some two thousand years later; because, God so loved the world, he gave his only begotten Son as a sacrifice for our sins.

In the same place where Abraham built his altar, God sacrificed His Son and the prophecy of Abraham was fulfilled when he said, "God will provide Himself a sacrifice." In the mount of the LORD it shall be seen and it was, two thousand years later. The picture of Abraham sacrificing his son is a foreshadowing of that which God would do for love of the world in sacrificing His only begotten Son. "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" (Rom.8:32).

"And the angel of the LORD called unto Abraham out of heaven the second time, And said, By myself have I sworn, saith the LORD, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son." (Gen.22:15-16). Going back to verse twelve, the angel of the LORD said, "...thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from "me." The angel of the LORD is none other than Jesus Christ. Again the Father, the Son: the Triunity of the Godhead is here in the Old Testament as well as the New Testament.

The Book of Hebrews talks about the problem that God has when he wants to make an oath to man. When you make an oath, you swear by something greater; but, God can't swear by anything greater so He swears by Himself. There is nothing higher to swear by. God wanted to establish the promises by two immutable things. Number one It is impossible for God to lie.

God swore by Himself, "That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies." (Gen.22:17). For many years it was thought that there were only three thousand stars in the sky. Before the age of telescopes, guys would sit out and count the stars at night. Several Astronomers of ancient times, counted the stars and came up with numbers in the area of three to six thousand that are visible to the naked eye; so, the early skeptics cast doubts on the Bible being inspired by God. God made a

severe mistake here by indicating that the stars were too numerous to count but then along came the telescope and it has been estimated that the number of stars, in our universe, are ten to the twenty-fifth power. It has also been estimated, by the number of cubic feet of sand that exist, that there are probably ten to the twenty-fifth power grains of sand on our earth.

"And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice." (Gen.22:18). So, we become the beneficiaries of the obedience of Abraham. Blessed because of Jesus, who was born of the "seed" of Abraham.

"So Abraham returned unto his young men, and they rose up and went together to Beer-sheba; and Abraham dwelt at Beer-sheba." (Gen.22:19). Now, Where was Isaac? It doesn't mention him coming back with Abraham, although we're sure he did. The Spirit does not mention it deliberately, because Isaac was a type of Christ.

After Christ's death, he was taken up into heaven and will not appear again until the Holy Spirit brings back the "bride" for the Son. Today the Holy Spirit is gathering, from among the world, a "bride" for the Son. When the "bride" is gathered, the Holy Spirit will bring "her" to the Son and He shall arise to meet them in the clouds of the air and so shall we ever be with the LORD. Isaac doesn't appear on the scene again until the time when his bride is brought to him by Eliezer, servant of Abraham who is a type of the Holy Spirit.

"And it came to pass after these things, that it was told Abraham, saying, Behold, Milcah, she hath also born children unto thy brother Nahor." (Gen.22:20) Abraham's brother Nahor still lived back in Babylon. Abraham probably received word from a caravan and heard that Milcah, his brother's wife, had born children.

"Huz his firstborn, and Buz his brother, and Kemuel the father of Aram, And Chesed, and Hazo, and Pildash, and Jidlaph, and Bethuel. And Bethuel begat Rebekah; these eight Milcah did bear to Nahor, Abraham's brother. And his concubine, whose name was Reumah, she bare also Tebah, and Gaham, and Thahash, and Maacah." (Gen.22:21-24). So, Nahor had twelve sons and we don't know how many daughters, because girls weren't important in that culture. Rebekah is mentioned because she plays an important role in the next couple of chapters. Abraham was, no doubt, interested in finding a wife for Isaac. In the following chapters, we will find out what he does.