

A New Beginning: The Birth of Isaac

Genesis 21.1-21

Genesis 21 is a turning point: Isaac is born! God's promise that He would make Abraham a great nation is now become a reality. But a threat to the promised blessing exists, and must be removed.

The Birth of Isaac

Faithfulness: "as He had promised" (1)

Sovereignty: "at the appointed time" (2)

Obedience: Isaac circumcised on the eighth day (3-4)

Wonder and Joy: God's gift of laughter (5-7)

The Departure of Ishmael

Conflict: Isaac mocked; Hagar and Ishmael sent away (8-14)

Blessing: God protects and provides for the outcasts (15-21)

The Message for us today...

Principle: When God fulfills His promise, it brings joy...but people of God must remove anything that threatens God's blessing.

Application: God's promise of salvation by faith brings joy; human effort brings failure and despair (Galatians 4.21-31).

**Digging Deeper**

- Genesis 21 records the wonderful fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham that he would have a son. This story spotlights the sovereignty of God. One aspect of God's sovereignty that may be confusing is how He controls events. In v2, we read that "at the appointed time" Isaac was born. What does this show about God? Does God determine every event? What is the difference between God 'determining' everything that happens, and God 'superintending' everything that happens? (*Note: The issue of God's sovereignty and human free will has puzzled theologians for centuries, so don't despair if you have questions! How would you describe God's working in history, and our lives?*)
- If you were alive in Abraham's day, the destruction of Sodom (Gen. 19), the conflict between Abraham and the king of Gerar (Gen. 20), and the covenant between Abraham and Abimelech at Beersheba (Gen.21.22-34) would've made all the headlines. But none of those events was as significant as the birth of Isaac to God's plan for history. The same was true in the time of the birth of Christ: International political tensions were big issues of the day, but none came close to the significance of the birth of Jesus. What issues seem significant today? What do you think is most significant in God's overall plan?
- The order of events in Genesis 21.1-7 is important. First, God is faithful in fulfilling His promise. Second, Abraham responds with obedience. Third, Sarah responds with joy. Do you see a pattern here which is reflected in our lives? What promise has God made that applies in your life? Is He faithful? How do you respond to His faithfulness? What is the result in your life when you have responded obediently to His will?
- Read Galatians 4.21-31. What error is Paul seeking to confront in these verses (and the whole book of Galatians)? With what does Paul associate Hagar and Ishmael? Sarah and Isaac? What is his point?