

Living At Peace in the Land

Genesis 21.22-34

The son of promise, Isaac, has been born; the trajectory of the story of God and Abraham is distinctly forward-looking. The second half of Gen. 21 tells of a treaty between Abraham and Abimelech. Why is this recorded? It reflects God's promise to bless all nations.

Abraham agrees to live in peace with Abimelech (22-24)

Believers should live peacefully in the world.

Abraham restores peace when it was threatened (25-27)

Believers should make peace whenever possible.

Abraham seeks to ensure continuing peace in the future (28-30)

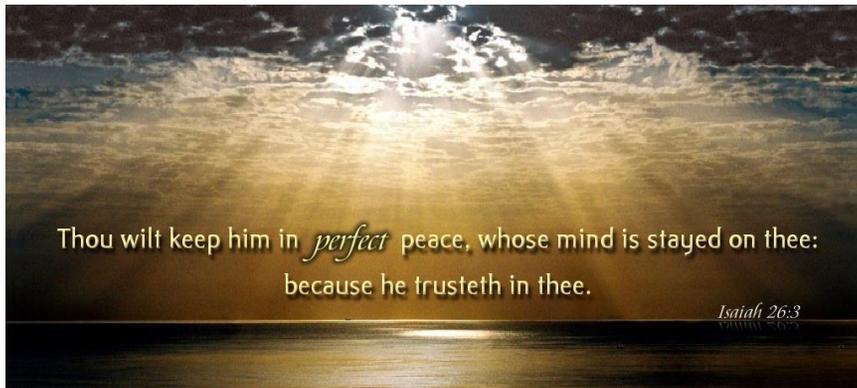
Believers should act to maintain peace.

Abraham praises God for peace and prosperity (31-34)

Believers should give God thanks for His blessings.

A lesson for us today (1 Timothy 2.1-4)

Christians should pray for peace, and live in a way that promotes peaceful relations with the world, so we can share the good news of God with those who don't know Him.



Thou wilt keep him in *perfect* peace, whose mind is stayed on thee:
because he trusteth in thee.

Isaiah 26:3



1. It is helpful in thinking of the significance of Genesis 21.22-34 to recall the setting. Abraham is living as an alien (sojourning) in Gerar, a country not his own. The account begins in Gen. 20, which records how he and Sarah first came to know Abimelech. Since then he has settled, had a son, and is a wealthy resident. The setting is ripe for tension. Abimelech and his commander, Phicol, might naturally wonder if Abraham was a threat to their people. What does Abimelech recognize about Abraham (v22)? Notice the implicit recognition of Abraham's God in his appeal for a treaty. Describe Abraham's attitude toward Abimelech.
2. In vss. 25-27, there is conflict. Water was precious commodity in the Negev, essential to survival and flocks. A well Abraham had dug was seized by Abimelech's servants. This threatens the peace they have just established. Abraham wanted peace, but it did not mean he would ignore wrong. What practical lessons can we learn from the way Abraham handles this problem?
3. While it is not entirely clear to us, the significance of Abraham giving *seven* lambs to Abimelech may be tied to him swearing an oath that Abraham is the rightful owner of the well (28-31). *Beersheba* means either "well of oath" or "well of seven." But whatever the specifics, Abraham shows his desire to live in peace. What can Christians living in the world learn from the example of Abraham?
4. The chapter ends with details that seem incidental – naming the place Beersheba, planting a tree. But these are in the context of the final statement of v33: *and there he called on the name of the Lord, the Everlasting God*. Abraham viewed the peace and blessings he experienced in this life as reason to publicly praise God, which would be a testimony to Philistines living in Gerar. He is fulfilling God's promise that he would be a blessing to all the families of the earth (Gen. 12.3). Read 1 Tim. 2.1-4. What did Paul tell us to pray for? Why? What does the Lord desire to come from this?