

Sent: Wednesday, January 16, 2019 1:38 PM
Subject: Last Nite's MOB Study on Genesis 20-21

"But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, to redeem those who were under the Law, so that we might receive adoption as sons!"
Galatians 4:4-5

Last nite's lesson started out with another "blip" in the life of Abraham and Sarah! Following the devastation at Sodom (which we covered in last week's lesson), Abraham "journeyed south toward the land of the Negev...and sojourned in Gerar"--a Philistine city on the border between Palestine and Egypt, about 10 miles south of Gaza. (The move was apparently made out of the need for Abraham--still unsettled and living a "semi-nomadic" life--to find water and pasture land for the growing number in his flocks and herds!)

As ridiculous as it sounds, Abraham, our "hero of faith"--out of fear for Abimelech, the king of Gerar--found it necessary once again to play the "sister act"--as he had done many years earlier, to everyone's detriment, during his sojourn in Egypt! And wouldn't you know, Abimelech--for reasons hard to explain--took Sarah into his harem, thus "jeopardizing" the plan and purpose of God for the promised "seed" of Isaac! (Arnold writes: "Even as Abraham has reached new spiritual heights in his covenant relationship with God, and learned to intercede for others, will he ever stop deceiving his neighbors and finally learn to trust fully in the promises of God?")

Well, we see God coming to the rescue once again as He intervenes to retain Sarah's purity by appearing to Abimelech in a dream, and telling him that "he was a dead man," because the woman he had taken was the wife of Abraham--thus putting the "fear of God" into him! Abimelech responds, in Genesis 20:4, much like Abraham had earlier (in Genesis 18:23-25) in "interceding" for the Lot and the people of Sodom: "Lord, will you slay a nation, even though blameless?" Ironically (and sadly!), the heathen king Abimelech in some ways showed more godly character than Abraham!

And yet God reveals to Abimelech that Abraham "is a prophet" and that if he returns Sarah, Abraham would pray for him and he would live! Genesis 20:17-18 tells us that Abraham indeed prayed for Abimelech and that God "healed him and his wife and his maids so that they all bore children"--something they weren't able to do previously because of the Sarah incident! (Arnold notes that "as undeserving as Abraham is, he is still the means by which God grants life and blessing to the nations, as prophesied in Genesis 12:3)

But there's more to the Abraham/Abimelech story in Genesis 21:22-34. After Abraham had dug a well, it was "seized by Abimelech's servants." (And thus there was, for a "blip in time," not only "jeopardy for the seed" but now also "jeopardy for the land"!)

But after Abraham "complained" to Abimelech, Abimelech--seeing how "God was with Abraham in all he did"--made a covenant with Abraham, granting him the well, which he named "Beersheba" (which will become a significant landmark for the Children of Israel)! Significantly, this was Abraham's first mark of ownership in the Land of Canaan, and Abraham planted a "tamarisk" tree (a long-living evergreen tree)--a kind of first installment in the land that God had promised his descendants!

And so Abraham, according to Genesis 21:33-34, there "called on the name of the Lord, the Everlasting God (first time this name for God is used)...and sojourned in the land of the Philistines for many days"!

That was the "blip"! Now the most significant part of our lesson--interspersed in between the Abraham/Abimelech incidents!

In Genesis 21:1-8, the suspense is finally resolved! Isaac is born!

Genesis 21:1-2 says: "Then the Lord took note of Sarah, as He had said, and the Lord did for Sarah as He had promised. So she conceived and bore a son to Abraham, at the appointed time of which God had spoken to him! Wow! Note the three-fold reference to the fulfillment of God's promise! For emphasis!

Interestingly, the words "took note of" (in vs. 1) is actually better translated "visited"! Signifying a special "intervention" by God in nature and human affairs! Highlighting a significant event in which God is personally involved! The same word is used in Genesis 50:24-25 where Joseph, on his death bed in Egypt, tells his brothers that God "would surely take care" of (visit) them and "bring them back to the land which God promised on oath to Abraham..."! It's also used in Jeremiah 29:10-13 where God promises to "rescue" (visit) the Children of Israel from their 70-year Babylonian captivity!

Genesis 21:1 also contains the words "at the appointed time"! Isaac was born at the "appointed time"! It was a miraculous birth! Occurring after a long interval of time! Bringing special joy to those both mother and father! Isaac, a beautiful picture of the coming birth of Christ!

And thus our memory verse: "But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, to redeem them who were under the Law, so that we might receive adoption as sons!" (Galatians 4:4-5)

Our God can be trusted to fulfill His promises! In the "fullness of time"!

"Yet those who wait for the Lord will gain new strength; they will mount up with wings like eagles; they will run and not be tired; they will walk, and not become weary!" (Isaiah 40:31)

Go with God this week, men, and be a blessing!

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