

Sent: Wednesday, February 15, 2017 4:35 PM  
Subject: Last Nite's MOB Study on the Birth of Isaac

"By faith even Sarah herself received ability to conceive, even beyond the proper time of life, since she considered Him faithful who had promised! Therefore, there was born even of one man, and him as good as dead at that, as many descendants as the stars of Heaven in number, and innumerable as the sand which is by the seashore! All these died in faith, without receiving the promise, but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance, and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth! For those who say such things make it clear that they are seeking a country of their own. And indeed, if they had been thinking of that country from which they went out, they would have had opportunity to return. But as it is, they desire a better country, that is a heavenly one! Therefore, God is not ashamed to be called their God; for He has prepared a city for them!"

Wow! The call of Abraham to be the father of a chosen people and a "great nation"--and now the miraculous birth of Isaac--marked pivotal points in the outworking of God's eternal plan and purpose for bringing about redemption for man--and peace with God! (Romans 5:1) And, according to Hagner, the author of Hebrews "wanted to include Sarah alongside Abraham as experiencing the power of faith in the birth of Isaac." And so, while Sarah "had at first laughed in unbelief, in the end she rejoiced at God's faithfulness!" But, according to Romans 4:20-21, Abraham "did not waiver in unbelief but grew strong in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully assured that what God had promised, He was able also to perform! Therefore, it was also credited to him as righteousness!"

Interestingly, more coverage is given to the birth of Isaac than to anyone else in the Bible--other than to the birth of Jesus Christ! And, Isaac's birth was a clear "foreshadowing" of the birth of Christ! Both were based on a divine promise! God promised that, against all odds, Sarah would have a son! And the prophet Isaiah prophesied, in Isa. 7:14, that "...the Lord Himself shall give you a sign! Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son and she will call His name Immanuel!"

Both Isaac and Jesus were born "at an appointed time"! Gen. 21:2 says: "So Sarah conceived and bore a son to Abraham in his old age, at the appointed time of which God had spoken to him!" And Galatians 4:4 states that "when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, so that He might redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons!"

Both were "miraculous births"! From Sarah's standpoint, impossible! And so, as Gen. 18:13 records, she laughed! And said: "Shall I indeed bear a child when I am so old?" To which God replied: "Is anything too hard for God?" And, of course, in the case of Jesus, the "virgin birth"! Mary asked (in Luke 1:34): "How can these things be, since I am a virgin?" To which the angel Gabriel replied: "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason, the holy child shall be called the Son of God...For nothing will be impossible with God!"

Both were also given a name by God before their births! In Gen. 17:18, after Abraham made an appeal for God to name Ishmael as his heir, God responded: "No! But Sarah will bear you a son, and you shall call his name "Isaac"! And, similarly, God appeared to Joseph in a dream (according to Matt.1:21) and said that Mary would "bear a Son; and you shall call His name "Jesus"!"

Well, there's at least one more similarity between the two births, and that relates to the long wait that occurred in the anticipation of their births! And we're reminded that God is never in a hurry to carry out His plans. Then again, He has eternity at His disposal! And, as we heard in last Sunday's sermon by Dr. Steven Lawson, nothing can thwart or hinder the outworking of His purpose! He's our Sovereign God! And He reigns!

There's one more thing we should take from this lesson--and that concerns the author of Hebrew's observation, in Heb.11:16, that because the great patriarchs of the faith looked for and desired a "better country"--a "heavenly one!" God is "not ashamed to be called their God!" We see this association noted elsewhere in the Scripture! In Gen. 28:13, when God appeared to Jacob in a dream and he saw a "ladder reaching up into heaven," he heard God reaffirm the Abrahamic Covenant, and saying: "I am the Lord! The God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac..." Later, when God called Moses at the "burning bush," He addressed himself as the "God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob"! And Jesus Himself, speaking to the Sadducees, asked if they had not heard what was spoken by God! "That I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob! ...Not the God of the dead but of the living!" (Matt. 22:31-32)

And so, from this lesson, we can take renewed assurance that we too can count on the promises of God! That nothing is too hard for God! That we can, like Abraham, grow--in fact are expected to grow--in our faith! And that by living and walking by faith we too can be associated with our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ! That "those who come behind might find us faithful" and that God would be remembered as truly our God!

Have a great week, men!

Lowell