



Study # 18

Genesis Chapter 16

Summary of the passage: After God's assurances to Abram of an innumerable offspring, the barrenness of Sarah's womb due to her age demanded a miracle. When the miracle was long in coming Sarai's faith gave way to fleshly thinking. While the practice of bearing children through a servant was the convention of the day, it was an act of unbelief. Hagar's bearing a child to Abram led to bitterness between her and Sarai. Sarai acted harshly. Hagar fled into the wilderness. In mercy the Lord met with Hagar calling her to return to her place of service to raise her son, Ishmael. God informed Hagar that Ishmael would be a "wild donkey of a man." He also stated that His descendants would become a violent troublous people. Many Arabs count Ishmael and Abraham as father figures.

Key verse: "And she called the name of the LORD that spake unto her, Thou God seest me: for she said, Have I also here looked after him that seeth me?" Genesis 16:13

In this text, Hagar expressed her surprise and delight that God found her in the wilderness to show His care for her. The Lord is not only omniscient, He also deals with souls personally and individually. From the second part of the text, it appears that God was seeking Hagar while Hagar was seeking Him.

Observations on this chapter:

1. Abram's faith was sorely tested by Sarai's suggestion that Abram become the father of children by her servant, Hagar.

A.W. Pink observed, "It is one thing to commit our way unto the Lord, but it is quite another to trust also in Him, and wait till He brings it to pass." By listening to the counsel of Sarai, Abram lost the integrity of his faith in the promises and power of the Lord. He should have waited for God's miracle, but impatience gave way to human expediency to follow the conventions of the time, when children of servants born to their masters were counted as heirs. Abram weakened in faith when on the advice of his wife, he acted contrary to God's word.

How does this apply to me? The Christian will constantly find himself, or herself conflicted between following worldly advice and the word of God. As our society abandons the rule of God the conventions of men will fail to align with the purposes and will of God. One such area of conflict comes to the fore in our modern health system. Due to medical advances couples who deal with infertility face issues and recommendations that may conflict with the purposes of God. That is certainly true where embryos are produced in larger numbers than needed only to be destroyed later when unwanted. When moral values are contrary to the sanctity of life, it is better to wait on the Lord than to trust in the unethical methods of men.

2. By resorting to fleshly means Abram's departure from the path of faith led to incalculable trouble.

The New Testament's commentary on this event, found in Galatians 4:22, shows that Abram chose the way of bondage. Abram's course of action boomeranged back upon him when, "Sarai said unto Abram, My wrong be upon thee..."

While the suggestion came from Sarai, due to loss of faith, the sin was Abram's, due to God's covenant promises given to him. Immediately after Hagar found that she was with child she despised her mistress, Sarai. That in turn caused offence and bitterness, so much so, that Sarah acted in a fleshly manner to treat Hagar harshly, causing Hagar to flee into the wilderness. Commenting on this, A.W. Pink stated, "In refusing to wait on the Lord, and in summoning to his aid this Egyptian maid for the fulfilling of the divine promise, Abram took a step which only "gendered to bondage". He had begun in the Spirit, but resorted to the flesh, and it brought his household into a saga of sins of the flesh.

How does this apply to me? Every believer still has to deal with the inclinations of a sin nature that would control their thinking, and actions. We must not forget the apostle Paul's warning that, "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that we cannot do the things that ye would" (Galatians 5:17). Note that, fleshly thinking leads to fleshly actions. To depart, therefore, from the word of the Lord and His holy law, to be swayed by worldly conventional thinking is ruinous to the child of God. The man or woman of faith must be constantly asking, What saith the Lord? We must seek His mind from within the scriptures of truth to keep us in the right path. The Christian must walk in the fear of the Lord and should fear to walk after the flesh.

3. Hagar was ministered to in the wilderness, by the angel of the LORD.

She was not forgotten for she stated, "Thou God seest me." She also declared God's goodness to her by naming the well "Beer-la-hai-roi, which means, "The well of him that liveth and seeth me." Within the term "seeth" is the provision and care of the Lord.

How does this apply to me? God not only sees us in our times of need, but also ministers to meet our needs. When the psalmist stated, "For the LORD knoweth the way of the righteous..." (Psalm 1:6) he meant that God directs our way. As the omniscient God, He cannot be ignorant of our needs and as our Heavenly Father, He cannot ignore them, but is certain to help. It is our great comfort to know that we are always under the eye of our heavenly Father.

4. This angel of the Lord, (v7) was a pre-incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Note how Hagar called this "angel of the LORD that spoke unto her, "Thou God." He was a divine being.

Albert Barnes commented on this first reference in scripture to the appearance of the pre-incarnate Christ.

"The angel of Jehovah. This phrase is especially employed to denote the Lord himself in that form in which he condescends to make himself manifest to man; for the Lord God says of this angel, "Beware of him, and obey his voice; provoke him not, for he will not pardon your transgressions; for my name is in his inmost" [Exo 23:21](#); that is, my nature is in his essence.

Accordingly, he who is called the angel of the Lord in one place is otherwise denominated the Lord or God in the immediate context ([Gen 16:7](#), [Gen 16:13](#); [Gen 22:11-12](#); [Gen 31:11](#), [Gen 31:13](#); [Gen 48:15-16](#); [Exo 3:2-15](#); [Exo 23:20-23](#); with [Exo 33:14-15](#)).

It is remarkable, at the same time, that the Lord is spoken of in these cases as a distinct person from the angel of the Lord, who is also called the Lord. The phraseology intimates to us a certain inherent plurality within the essence of the one only God, of which we have had previous indications [Gen 1:26](#); [Gen 3:22](#).

The phrase "angel of the Lord," however, indicates a more distant manifestation to man than the term Lord itself. It brings the medium of communication into greater prominence. It seems to denote some person of the Godhead in angelic form."

How does this apply to me? We learn that the Lord loved to commune with His people in the Old Testament times, and longed for the day of his full incarnation in human flesh. He identifies with His people in real terms. Christianity is based on the wonder that sinners have a friend in Jesus. His friendship leads us to fellowship with the Father. We are not only saved to serve the Lord; we are saved for fellowship with Him (1John 1:1-7).

Things to do in light of this study:

- Think of ways in which God's omniscience should control the Christian's walk and actions?
- Read Galatians chapters 4 & 5 to learn more of Paul's commentary on the flesh versus the Spirit.
- Seek out a Biblical definition of the New Testament use of the term "flesh" when referring to the sin nature within born again believers.
- Make use of the truth of Christ's delight to fellowship with His people in private and public prayer.