

EXPOSITION OF GENESIS

Message #48

Genesis 21:1-11

GOD WILL ALWAYS FULFILL HIS PROMISES TO HIS PEOPLE AND WHEN HE DOES THEY WILL REJOICE , BUT ALSO REGRET THEIR FAITHLESS FAILURES.

NARRATIVE OBSERVATION #1 - God fulfills His word. 21:1-2

The main thrust of these two verses is that God's word is completely reliable and dependable and may be trusted for complete, accurate and precise fulfillment.

Lesson #1 - God fulfills His word precisely as He said He would. 21:1-2a

The obvious emphasis of these two verses is God does what He says He will do. Three times that point is stressed - "had said", "had promised", "had spoken." Twenty-five years prior to this episode, God promised Abraham that He would produce a seed (12:4,7) and now twenty years later, He did exactly what He said He would do.

The Hebrew verb "took note" has a definite connection to the fulfillment of God's word. The word itself implies that God looks after someone He has promised something to. The theological idea is that when God makes a promise, He providentially looks after the one to whom He has made the promise and eventually He literally fulfills it. This may be a literal fulfillment of promised judgment or promised blessing. Dr. Allen Ross said this word describes the Divine intervention of God in someone's life that controls the destiny (*Creation & Blessing*, p. 378). The fact that Abraham and Sarah got out of the Egyptian fiasco (Genesis 12:10-20), the war with Chedorlaomer (Genesis 14) and Abimelech (Genesis 20), were no coincidences. This was the Sovereign protective work of God preserving these two for His purposes.

Lesson #2 - God fulfills His word in His own time . 21:2b

The words "appointed time" describe a time that was determined, appointed and defined by God (Gesenius, *Hebrew Lexicon*, p. 447). The fulfillment of God's word occurred precisely according to His time schedule and as Dr. S. L. Johnson said, "Impatience is out of place when the promises of God are involved" (S. L. Johnson, *Genesis*, Study #36, p. 3). Sarah is the only 90 year old woman in history who had a baby and nursed it. This is amazing because not only concerning Sarah, but after Sarah dies, Abraham, who is already 100, will remarry and father six more sons before he dies at age 175 (Genesis 25:2,7). **You are never too old to be blessed by God!**

NARRATIVE OBSERVATION #2 - Abraham reacts to God's fulfilled word. 21:3-5

The reaction of Abraham to God fulfilling His word was complete and immediate obedience.

Reaction #1 - Abraham names Isaac. 21:3

We may recall that the name Isaac means sporting laughter or he who laughs in a sporting way and it was a name God gave to Abraham (Genesis 17:19), Three times in these three verses . we read "his son Isaac." The stress is that this is the seed of promise, the son through whom "the

seed” would come and this Abrahamic son’s name was Isaac. **If ever there is a time to laugh, it is when you get out from under the gloom of failure and start experiencing the blessings of God.**

Reaction #2 - Abraham circumcises Isaac. 21:4

Abraham is obeying God by circumcising Isaac on the eighth day, just as God previously commanded him (Genesis 17: 12). Josephus records that the Jews have stuck to the eighth day circumcision rite, but the Arabs, who also come from Abraham through Ishmael, circumcise their sons after the thirteenth year, which is the age Ishmael was circumcised (Genesis 17:25) (*The Complete Works of Josephus*, p. 36).

At 100 years old, Abraham is still focused on obeying the word of God.

NARRATIVE OBSERVATION #3 - Sarah reacts to God’s fulfilled word. 21 :6-10

Reaction #1 - Sarah’s exuberance over Isaac. 21 :6-8

Sarah was totally exuberant in what God had done and she laughed. It is so interesting that what once was a laugh of disbelief (Genesis 18:13), now becomes a joyous laugh of faith . Here is a 90 year old woman, nursing a newborn baby. **It is very evident that God’s fulfillment of His promises to Sarah was not based on her faithfulness, but on His faithfulness to His own word.** Most believe the weaning age was 3 (I Samuel 1:22-23; II Chronicles 31 :16).

Reaction #2 - Sarah’s expulsion of Ishmael. 21:9-10

When this happened, Isaac was a little boy about age 3 and Ishmael was about 16. Josephus says that Sarah’s attitude toward Ishmael was first one of love, but when she saw him mocking her son, she saw him as a threat to Isaac’s future and wanted Abraham to get rid of both Hagar and Ishmael (*The Complete Works of Josephus*, p. 36).

The irony of this mess is that it would never have occurred had not Sarah devised her own godless plan instead of waiting on God to fulfill His promise. This whole mess broke Abraham’s heart (v. 11). The joy that came from seeing God fulfill His promise was turned to sorrow because Abraham had made some wrong choices in life and now he had to live with some regrets. **Sometimes though in order to enjoy the full blessings of God you must make a break from carnal people who cause contention.** In one Biblical application to this very story - Law cannot live with Grace (Galatians 4:21-31).

The message to see here is plain- God will always fulfill His word precisely, but as we wait for Him to do it, we need to stay faithful to Him and His Word.