

Genesis 20-21 • A Failure, a Promise Kept and a Covenant

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Open your Bible to Genesis chapter 20. We're studying through the Book of Genesis here on Wednesday evening. Kind of weird, you know, here on Wednesday, we're starting our fourth pass through the Bible and on Sunday morning we're finishing our third. And so it's a little kind of crazy, but it's neat because we're still able to go back and forth.

And I always have liked doing Old Testament on one, usually on Wednesday, and then New Testament on Sunday. And it just kind of, it helps to assure that you're getting, you know, both, you know. You're getting the New Testament gospel at the same time that you're understanding or hopefully gaining a better understanding of the Old Testament.

You know, there are some churches, Calvary chapels, that are teaching through the Bible just like we are, but they may not be big enough to have a midweek service or something like that. So the pastor starts on Sunday morning and he's teaching through the Old Testament and for 10 years they're in the Old Testament and they don't even touch the New Testament for 10 years or so, you know, and you think, wow, that's a long time. So, I've really always been kind of blessed with the opportunity to be able to stay in both Old and New Testament, with you guys all the time, so there you go. Genesis 20, are you there? Good.

Lord, open our hearts, fill us with your Spirit, fill us with understanding. We give you this time in Jesus name, amen. Let me ask you a question before we get into this chapter. Have you ever made an assumption about someone or something that later on you found you were 100% wrong? I'm willing to bet that most of us have probably done that at one time or another and there are always dangers associated with making assumptions before you've got all the facts or before you've kind of just looked into things and you know what you're talking about.

And what we're going to learn in this chapter is that Abraham is going to learn a lesson about making assumptions. Here we go, it says in verse 1 that, *“From there Abraham journeyed toward the territory of the Negeb...”* (ESV) Your

Bible may say Negev with a v and that's the one that sounds more natural to me because that's kind of what I grew up with the NIV. But it can go either way and anyway there you go. And it says he, "¹ ...and lived between Kadesh and Shur; and he sojourned in Gerar."

Now, if you recognize Gerar at all, that is a Philistine area. So he's near the Mediterranean coast in what would be today the Gaza Strip, which is that kind of that area, down leading toward the border of Egypt. So he's essentially in Philistine territory here and, this is, as it says, in the Negeb, or the Negev, which is a wilderness area in southern Israel, bordering, going all the way down to the Egyptian border, also bordering Jordan today on the east side. And, that's why the New King James just says very simply, "*and Abraham journeyed from there to the south.*" So this is just the southern part of Israel.

So and it says, "² *And Abraham said of Sarah his wife, "She is my sister. ..."*" Does that sound familiar to you at all? Yup, here we go again. You'll remember that back in Genesis chapter 12, Abraham and Sarah traveled to Egypt because of a famine. And because Abraham was fearful that the Egyptians would see his wife for the beauty that she was and kill him to take her if they knew that they were married, he had her tell everyone that Abraham was my brother, we're brother and sister. And it was simply a way of protecting himself and the problem was, it put Sarah in harm's way. So here's Abraham again protecting himself at the cost of his wife which is not a good thing.

And you know, back in chapter 12, you might have remembered that I commented on the fact that we were mildly impressed with the fact that the Egyptians would have thought that Sarah was such a beauty because she was probably around 65 years of age at the time and we found out that she was in fact still so gorgeous that, her beauty was reported to the king of Egypt. And she was even taken into his harem, where, you know, he never touched her, but she was there and so on.

Well, now, it's been a few years, she's probably in her upper 80s but apparently, Sarah is still a dish. I mean, she's in..., nothing apparently has happened to diminish her beauty because we're told in the second part of verse 2, "*...And Abimelech king of Gerar sent and took Sarah.*" He took her, because he assumed she was a free woman to be taken because they were telling people, she's my sister, he's my brother. So this has to be some gorgeous woman, you know, speaking of killing for something. I think the women probably living in Hollywood now would kill to have what Sarah had, don't you suppose?

I mean, good looks up into her upper 80s to the point where kings are fighting over her and stuff like that. Well, anyway, once again, the Lord has to intervene. It says in verse 3, *“But God came to Abimelech in a dream by night and said to him, “Behold, you are a dead man because of the woman whom you have taken, for she is a man's wife.””*

Now, so the Lord moves into this situation but before we move on too quickly, I just want to point out that this passage underscores for you and me the sanctity of the marriage union. And you can see that here in this passage, at least the sanctity of the marriage union in the eyes of God. Notice what God says to Abimelech, and by the way, Abimelech is not a name, it's a title. It would be like King or Pharaoh.

So, notice what the Lord says to him, He says, *“you're a dead man.”* Why? What have I done? You've taken another man's wife and that, my friends, is how God feels about that particular issue. And that's important for us to understand and what's more, we find out as we read on, that Abimelech even understood the significance of a marriage union, which we see in these following verses.

Verse 4, *“Now Abimelech (we're told) had not approached her. So he said, “Lord, will you kill an innocent people? ⁵ Did he not himself say to me, ‘She is my sister’? And she herself said, ‘He is my brother.’ In the integrity of my heart and the innocence of my hands I have done this.” ⁶ Then God said to him in the dream, “Yes, I know that you have done this in the integrity of your heart, and it was I who kept you from sinning against me. Therefore I did not let you touch her.*

⁷ *Now then, return the man's wife, for he is a prophet, so that he will pray for you, and you shall live. But if you do not return her, know that you shall surely die, you and all who are yours. ⁸ So Abimelech rose early in the morning and called all his servants and told them all these things. And the men were very much afraid.”* I want you to stop there for just a moment, because I want you to notice here a couple of things about Abimelech.

First of all, he has this dream from the Lord and he wakes up in the morning and he doesn't think, whoa, that was spicy pizza, I really had a weird dream. No, he takes it from the Lord immediately and notice he right away takes care of the situation. It says he gets up very early in the morning, he wastes no time responding to the Word of the Lord. And did you notice there at the end of verse 8, that his men responded the same way. Nobody tried to talk him out of it, nobody tried to say, oh, come on, what's the big deal? What's the big...

dreams aren't that reliable, so maybe you should just kind of think on this for a while. No, it says that they were very much afraid, so it shows the fear and respect that they had about the Word of the Lord there in Gerar.

All right, let's keep reading. ⁹ *Then Abimelech called Abraham and said to him, "What have you done to us? And how have I sinned against you, that you have brought on me and my kingdom a great sin? (in other words, he's asking Abraham, why did you set me up like this to be under the judgment of your God? He says) You have done to me things that ought not to be done."*

¹⁰ *And Abimelech said to Abraham, "What did you see, that you did this thing?"* (now, I want you to pay attention now to Abraham's response)

¹¹ *Abraham said, "I did it because I thought, 'There is no fear of God at all in this place, and they will kill me because of my wife.'"* Now stop there for a moment. I started off asking you if you've ever made an assumption that you ended up finding out later was wrong.

Abraham is admitting right here to Abimelech, that he assumed that Abimelech and the people of his kingdom were both ungodly and immoral, he's telling him that. He says, I just figured, you know, you guys are going to kill me, I figured there was no fear of God around here, you guys don't care. And where there's no fear of God, there's no morality, there are no laws that are going to keep people from doing horrific, heinous acts so I figured that's what I was getting into here.

So you've seen now what happened, were Abraham's assumptions correct? No, he was 100% wrong. The fact of the matter is Abimelech understood that taking another man's wife was wrong. He understood that and he never would have done it, had he known. In fact, his argument was, I didn't know this, I had no idea and not only did Abimelech respond that way, but so did his servants. So, was there..., and remember, it says, they were very much afraid when they just heard a dream. So, was there a fear of God in that place? Yes, there was.

Let's keep reading. ¹² *Besides, (this is still Abraham talking, I should say, excusing himself) she is indeed my sister, the daughter of my father though not the daughter of my mother, and she became my wife. ¹³ And when God caused me to wander from my father's house, I said to her, 'This is the kindness you must do me: at every place to which we come, say of me, "He is my brother."*

¹⁴ *Then Abimelech took sheep and oxen, and male servants and female servants, and gave them to Abraham, and returned Sarah his wife to him. ¹⁵ And Abimelech said, "Behold, my land is before you; dwell where it pleases*

you.”¹⁶ To Sarah he said, “Behold, I have given your brother a thousand pieces of silver. (and I want you to pay attention to this, what he says here now) *It is a sign of your innocence in the eyes of all who are with you, and before everyone you are vindicated.*” Those are interesting words, aren't they? I want you to notice here that Abimelech is doing everything in his power to right this mistaken wrong.

He begins by giving gifts to Abraham, which seems a little weird to us. We kind of look at this and we go, you know, Abe, I think you should be giving gifts to Abimelech to kind of say, I'm sorry for putting you in this situation. But the other is happening. And so, you know, you can see Abimelech's eagerness to take care of this.

But secondly, notice what he does for Sarah. Well, no, no, before we even get to that, what does he say to Abraham? Hey, here's my land, you can just live wherever you want. Rather than saying, tell you what, big guy, why don't you like amscray from this whole area and just, you can go live somewhere else because I really don't want to put up with people who are putting me in harm's way and potentially endangering my kingdom. So why don't you just go live somewhere else?

He doesn't do that, he says, here is my kingdom, live where you want. He opens the door wide, welcomes him to stay and then, in those final verses, he, says related to Sarah, “Behold, I have given your brother a thousand pieces of silver. (look at this) *It is a sign of your innocence in the eyes of all who are with you,* (he says) *and before everyone you are vindicated.*”

You know what Abimelech's doing? And he's taking care that her reputation is not being tarnished. So rather than rebuking Abraham, kicking him out of his land, you know, giving him a military escort out the door, he's blessing him with goods, telling him he can stay anywhere he wants and to Sarah, making sure... It's like, hey, I just want all the people that know you to know that this was, you are a godly woman, nothing happened and your reputation is sound.

So once again, let me ask you the question, was Abraham's assumptions, were they correct? No, they were not. So we learned this very painful lesson, along with Abraham, that assuming things is a very dangerous thing to do. And you need to ask yourself, when you come to some kind of a conclusion, am I assuming? Is there information here that I just don't have, or am I making an assumption. Because you see, assumptions are not usually drawn out of thin air, we typically gain assumptions based on something that's happened in the past. Because Abraham had traveled and he'd come to places where it was ungodly,

he came to places where there was no fear of God in the eyes of any of the people and so, this was his experience. And so when we base our assumptions on our past experience and we assume when we get to this place or meet that person or whatever, oh, it's going to be just the same. You know, people are assuming things about you all the time as a Christian because they hear things in the news, they see things, or maybe they've been to church and they've been hurt. They saw hypocrisy, which happens, let's face it. Hypocrisy happens in the church and they know that you're a believer and you're going to church and they're making assumptions about you, they're making assumptions about what you believe.

They're making assumptions about how you think, what you think about various, what we consider to be sinful actions. They assume things about you and what you believe, well that's on them. But as believers, we need to be careful not to make wrongful assumptions, this is the kind of trouble you can get into in a situation like that. Because you see, honestly, Abraham should have been ashamed. Not just of talking his wife into a lie, but when all the fallout and everything hit the fan, Abimelech is the one who did right. He's the one who did everything in his power to restore relationships and to protect the woman.

Do you understand, people? A husband is called to protect his wife, that's not supposed to happen by a perfect stranger. Abraham should have been protecting Sarah, not Abimelech. Abimelech was an interesting man. We're going to see that even later on in the next chapter.

Final verses are also kind of interesting. It says, *“¹⁷ Then Abraham prayed to God, and God healed Abimelech, and also healed his wife and female slaves so that they bore children. ¹⁸ For the Lord had closed all the wombs of the house of Abimelech because of Sarah, Abraham's wife.”* And so, you know, the chapter ends with this interesting statement, even though Abraham was clearly in the wrong by what he did.

Acting out of fear, making these wrongful assumptions, placing Sarah in harm's way rather than protecting her, risking adultery within his marriage and then, here's the most important thing, frankly, placing the promise of God in jeopardy, right? Sarah is about to get pregnant with Isaac by a miracle and this is now the second time when Abraham has put the manifestation of that promise in jeopardy, in danger, by his fearful actions. And yet still God uses Abraham to intercede for this otherwise godly king.

Chapter 21 goes on, and this is where the realization, the fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham and Sarah comes to fruition. *“The Lord visited Sarah as*

he had said, and the Lord did to Sarah as he had promised. ² And Sarah conceived and bore Abraham a son in his old age at the time of which God had spoken to him.” You'll remember that when He came and visited Abraham at his tent by the trees of Mamre, He told him, by this time next year, your wife will conceive and have a child. So this happened, just as the Lord had spoken.

Verse 3, *“Abraham called the name of his son who was born to him, whom Sarah bore him, Isaac.”* And Isaac means, he laughs, or if you will, simply, laughter. *“⁴ And Abraham circumcised his son Isaac when he was eight days old, as God had commanded him. ⁵ Abraham was a hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him.”* Now, a hundred, well that's getting up there.

We know that when God called Abraham to leave his homeland, which was to leave Haran and to go to Canaan, because He had promised to give him that land, that Abraham was 75 years old. So now, at the birth of Isaac, he is 100 years old and that of course means that it took 25 years between the time the promise was spoken to the time when the promise was fulfilled. And I don't care how long you live, 25 years is a long time to wait for a promise to be fulfilled because it was 25 years of taking that promise by faith and Abraham and Sarah did not live out that 25 years perfectly.

They faltered at times in their faith and gave birth to an Ishmael even due to their faltering. So, I always love the fact that the Bible doesn't whitewash the characters of Scripture, you know, I'm really glad about that. You know, Abraham, David, Moses, you could go on and just go through, I mean, Jacob, you know, he was a deceiver.

We go through and we learn that these individuals, many of whom are either patriarchs or pillars of the nation of Israel in some way, Elijah, they were, they were just men and they were filled with human weakness and made some terrible mistakes along the way. I'm so glad the Bible doesn't whitewash that. It doesn't just kind of make them seem like these paragons of virtue that are untouchable for you and me to even understand.

But we see their failures, you know. David committing adultery, taking another man's wife, and then covering it up. Moses murdering an Egyptian, he murdered someone and then later on, even after God called him to go to Egypt to appeal to Pharaoh to let the Jews go, Moses hadn't even circumcised his, his own kids; his own boys. God had to meet him along the way and spank him hard over that little omission.

So there's all these areas we see of disobedience and failures of unbelief and, you know... But I'm glad God included those in the Word because I can relate to guys like Abraham, because I've had my own failures and I know what it is to walk in unbelief, I know what it is. I don't know if I've ever waited 25 years for a promise to come about. Sue has, Sue has waited over 25 years, as a matter of fact. We were, we were given a word from the Lord and it wasn't something that, it was different, okay, it wasn't something that we were hanging our reputations on.

Sarah, literally was considered to be a woman cursed by God for not having a baby and so the Lord comes along and says, you're going to have a baby. Really, when? 25 years ticks off before this thing happens, that's a lot to hang your reputation on, you know, as a woman back in those days.

But, when Sue and I were just starting off in ministry, the Lord gave her a promise that she was going to be a Bible teacher, and in fact, was going to go into even more detail in her teachings than I do in my teachings. And at that time, we had 2 little babies at home, 2 kids, like, we had a 3 year old and a 1 year old, I think, at home and we ended up having 2 more kids. And Sue stayed home and homeschooled all 4 of them through, from kindergarten to graduation. And it wasn't until really after our, our kids were grown, that this teaching ministry of hers began to come to fruition.

And we were reminded, wow, God gave us a promise way back when, and now in our case, we kind of forgot about it, you know, until we remembered. So like I said, it wasn't the same thing, okay, but there was a long wait, there was a long wait.

So can I just encourage you with something, that God's not in a hurry and I don't know if that catches you by surprise, but I'll say it again, God's not in a hurry. So when you're praying and when you're tempted to say, I'm praying or I've prayed about or God has said something or made me aware of it, but it's just not here, or God's not answering, or I haven't gotten an answer, can I just tell you that you haven't waited or prayed long enough?

God is faithful. If He told you something, He will fulfill it, He will fulfill it, one way or another. He will fulfill all of His promises to you. "Yeah, but pastor, I've prayed, been praying and praying and praying." "How long? 25 years?" "Well, why would God have me wait 25 years?"

No, that's His business, but sometimes I think there's a test of faith going on, you know? Are you going to stay faithful? Are you going to hang on? Even

when circumstances seem to go against what He's told you. We are such creatures of circumstances, we humans, and we allow those to be a commentary on what the Bible teaches; a negative, a contrary commentary. We allow our circumstances to comment on the Word of God and to tell us what God said is not true, that's what happens. And we have to get to the point where we believe God above our circumstances, that's hard.

Now, in Abraham and Sarah's case, their circumstances were, we not only haven't conceived a child, Sarah's now way past childbearing years, you know? She's done, she's gone through menopause, she's..., everything shut down. This is not happening in any sort of a biological, physical way, this is not happening. That was their circumstances people, do you understand that? And that's what they had to go up against as it relates to hanging on to the promise of God, that's hard.

And yet, guess what? Isaac was born as God had promised, he came, eventually. And those words are so significant, you know, you might even underline them in your Bible. Isaac, it's the end of verse 5, Isaac was born to him as He had promised. I think, yeah.

Verse 6, *“And Sarah said, “God has made laughter for me; everyone who hears will laugh over me”*” And she's not saying they'll laugh at me, she means they will laugh or rejoice in laughter with her for her good favor. *“⁷ And she said, “Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? Yet I have borne him a son in his old age.”*” I love that, she points to Abraham.

He's going to go on and have more kids, by the way, she doesn't know it. But after she passes away, we've talked about this, Abraham's going to actually remarry and have more kids, like 6 more. And so here she's going, Abraham, wow, he is an old coot, who would have ever thought that at his age he'd be fathering children? What she ought to be saying is, this is incredible for me, who would imagine that I would be nursing a baby.

But here's the deal, here's the point of what she's saying. The point is, Isaac is a miracle child, that's the point, okay? But you see, Christians, and this is important, that's why Isaac is a picture that carries through into the New Testament and do you know what he's a picture of? He's a picture of you, he's a picture of you and he's a picture of me, Isaac is. Because Isaac is a picture of all those who are born supernaturally through the power of God.

Not through, we've all been born in this room, everyone in this room was born naturally and I'm hoping that everyone in this room has been born

supernaturally because that is how we are saved. Let me put this passage up that you all know from John, chapter 1, versus 12 and 13. John writes,

John 1:12-13 (ESV)

But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

But to all who did receive him, (and that's Jesus, who all received Jesus) who believed in his name, (which is to believe everything He ever said about Himself) he (God) gave the right to become children of God, (how were they born? Well, they) who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh (like a couple coming together and saying let's have a baby) nor of the will of man, but of God.

Born of, what does that mean when it says born of God? It means supernaturally born, something that man can't do on his own, but God can do and that is give you new birth. What did Jesus say to Nicodemus? You must be born again in order to enter the kingdom of heaven and of course, Nicodemus didn't understand. What are you talking about? You got a man enter his mother's womb for a second time? No, no, no, no, Nick, that's natural birth, it's not what I'm talking about. I'm talking about supernatural birth; born as the result of a miracle.

Do you understand that when you got saved, a miracle took place? People are always saying to me, how come we don't see miracles like they did back in the Bible? Are you joking? Every single one of you who is a born again Christian is a living miracle. You were born of God, not of man, you are a miracle. And so, you see, Isaac is a picture of you. We're going to find here as we get later into this chapter, that there's also a picture of those who have not been born again.

Anyway, let's keep reading. ⁸ *And the child grew and was weaned.*” And some of you are thinking, oh, you know, 9 months old, maybe 6 months old, oh no. They weaned their, some people say they weaned their children, at the age of 5, probably closer to 2 to 3 years of age when children were weaned at that time, which sounds ridiculously long to us. There are some numbers that are even bigger. So you can assume here, that Isaac is probably somewhere between his second and third birthday.

And it says, ⁹ *And Abraham made a great feast on the day that Isaac was weaned.* ⁹ *But Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had borne to Abraham, laughing.*” All right, now, what's wrong with this? What's wrong

with this? Sarah laughed and they named him, “he laughs” and then Sarah went on to say, everybody who hears of it is going to laugh with me. Well, here on the day that Isaac is weaned, we find out that Ishmael is laughing and interestingly enough, this is the same Hebrew word that is translated earlier where it says that, Sarah says, God has given me laughter, same word. But the context tells us that it's a different kind of laughter. In fact, if you have an NIV or a New American Standard Bible (NASB), your Bible actually says, “*and the son of Hagar mocked,*” if you have a different translation.

The New King James Bible says that Ishmael was scoffing. And what those Bibles are doing is they are translating that word in context, do you understand? Because Sarah wouldn't have objected to Ishmael or anybody else joining in the laughter of rejoicing, that wouldn't have been a problem. But obviously this was a problem and by the way, Ishmael, by this time, is around 16 or 17 years old.

And you know that this kind of laughter was the laughter of mocking, because in verse 10, it says that, “*So she (Sarah) said to Abraham, “Cast out this slave woman with her son, for the son of this slave woman shall not be heir with my son Isaac.”*” Now, that tells us, in context, that Ishmael's laughter was not a rejoicing laughter. But there's more to verse 10 that we need to see, because I made the point here just a moment ago, that Isaac is a picture of those who have been born as the result of a promise, and that's you. Isaac was born as the result of a promise, so were you, that when we come to faith in Jesus Christ, we will be born again. That's the promise of God, and that is fulfilled in every person who comes to faith in Jesus.

But Ishmael is also a picture of those who are born according to the flesh, born by only natural means. Remember, Ishmael was born as the result of really Abraham and Sarah having a faltering of faith and instead saying, well, obviously God wants to produce this promised child through natural means. So why don't you take Hagar, my servant and have a baby through her? Okay, and he agreed. Well, what were they trying to do? They're trying to bring about God's promise through natural means.

People, do you understand you can't bring about God's promise through natural means? You know what that means for us before we knew Christ? It means you can't be saved by trying to be a good person, you can't in the flesh, be a child of God. You can try, you can try, you can try, you can... Ladies, you can put your hair in a special bun with a little cap, you can wear special clothes. Men, you can wear special clothes, you can do all these exterior things, it will not save you.

You cannot be saved by anything related to the flesh because the man of flesh or the child of flesh has not been supernaturally reborn, he is not a child according to promise, he is a child according to biology and the flesh. And we were all that once, but we came to Christ and He gave us new birth as the result of a promise. So, it's this beautiful picture. Now, but there's one other picture that we see here in Ishmael's mocking of this weaning celebration for Isaac and that is conflict between the sons of the flesh and the sons of promise.

Paul talks about this, and in fact, he uses this very story in his letter to the Galatians. Let me put this on the screen for you from Galatians chapter 4, Paul writes,

Galatians 4:29 (ESV)

But just as at that time he who was born according to the flesh persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit, so also it is now.

But just as at that time he who was born according to the flesh (that's Ishmael) persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit, (that's Isaac) so also it is now.

In other words, that has kept rolling ever since. The sons of the flesh have been, and will continue to have conflict with the sons of promise. And when I say sons, you know that's not a gender specific thing, it's gender inclusive to include women as well. So, this is the picture.

There's all these pictures that the Book of Genesis paints for us. That the New Testament authors use, like Paul just did, to bring greater dimension and understanding to what's happening. So that's why Jesus and the other writers said, listen, if you're being persecuted for righteousness sake, don't be surprised, this has been going on for a long time. The sons of the flesh will always persecute the sons of promise, they always will. It will not stop until Jesus comes and sets things right and brings judgment and brings reward for those who are waiting for Him. This will continue, don't go, oh, what is happening? We all know what's happening, the Bible has made it very clear to us what's happening. Don't be surprised, the Bible says, when you suffer trials of many kinds, don't be surprised.

But even so, Abraham was troubled by what Sarah said when she said, you need to get rid of this kid. In fact, we're told in verse 11, “*And the thing was very displeasing to Abraham on account of his son.*” Because you know, Ishmael is his son, he loves his son. But God comes and speaks to Abraham and we don't know how much time passed between when Sarah said, hey, get rid of this kid

and his mother. And I don't know, maybe, maybe Abraham twiddled his thumbs for a while, wondering how he was going to do this. But the Lord did intervene, speaking to him, and He said, ¹² ... *“Be not displeased because of the boy and because of your slave woman. Whatever Sarah says to you, do as she tells you, for through Isaac shall your offspring be named.”* And by the way, that phrase right there, *“through Isaac shall your offspring be named,”* that's quoted 2 times in the New Testament. Once in the Book of Hebrews and I believe also in the Book of Galatians.

Verse 13, *“And I will make a nation of the son of the slave woman also, because he is your offspring.”* So how did the Lord just console Abraham? Sarah's basically saying, just get rid of him but the Lord says, it's okay, I'm going to be with him and he's going to be okay, he's not going to die in the wilderness. In fact, I'm going to make him into a great nation, just because he's your son. So, I would call that consolation, wouldn't you? For Abraham to do what, you know, he's been told to do.

So we're told in verse 14, *“So Abraham rose early in the morning and took bread and a skin of water and gave it to Hagar, putting it on her shoulder, along with the child, and sent her away. And she departed and wandered in the wilderness of Beersheba.”* Now, that name, Beersheba, we're going to find out at the end of this chapter, that, that area, that region hasn't even been named Beersheba yet. But again, this is one of those anachronistic usages of a name so that we can understand basically the placement in Bible lands.

So, we're told here in verse 15 that, *“When the water in the skin was gone, she put the child under one of the bushes.”* So Hagar and Ishmael, they're wandering here in this wilderness area, which is part of the Negev, okay. Beersheba is in the wilderness of Negev, it is referred to as the wilderness of Beersheba and the wilderness of Negev; both, it's the same area. And it, and so they're out of water and you know, without water, you can't last all that long.

I didn't look it up to find out how long, but it's not very long. You have to have water. You can go without food for quite a while, but you can't go without water. Dehydration sets in, it's a very nasty way to go and she figures that they're about to die. So she doesn't even want to watch as he dies, so she makes her son, who again is around 16, 17 years old, sit under some kind of a bush in the shade, whatever shade it's going to give.

And it says in verse 16 that, *“Then she went and sat down opposite him a good way off, about the distance of a bowshot, (and that would be about 100 yards) for she said, “Let me not look on the death of the child.” And as she sat*

opposite him, she lifted up her voice and wept.” So Hagar is convinced at this point that they're going to die, they're going to perish in the desert. She couldn't bear to watch her son die of starvation, she distances herself from him.

But in verse 17, we hear this interesting statement that says, *“And God heard the voice of the boy, ...”* And that's interesting because we weren't told that Ishmael had spoken up to this point, nor are we told that he cried out, but apparently he did because it says, *“¹⁷...and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven and said to her, “What troubles you, Hagar? Fear not, for God has heard the voice of the boy where he is. ¹⁸ Up! Lift up the boy, and hold him fast with your hand, for I will make him into a great nation.” ¹⁹ Then God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water. And she went and filled the skin with water and gave the boy a drink.”* So God's provision. By the way, we don't know if God supernaturally created a pool in the desert just for them at this point, or whether He merely revealed to Hagar where she could find one, but was apparently just out of her eyesight. Either way, the Lord provided, it doesn't really matter.

And it says in verse 20 that, *“And God was with the boy, and he grew up. He lived in the wilderness and became an expert with the bow. ²¹ He lived in the wilderness of Paran, and his mother took a wife for him from the land of Egypt.”* And that's totally understandable since she herself was Egyptian.

By the way, we're not exactly sure where the wilderness of Paran is. If you, were to get on Google Maps and put in the name Paran, you would see a very small area in, southern Israel. And it is down in that wilderness area but, there are other Bible scholars who believe that this, and the wilderness of Paran, was located much farther south in what is today modern Saudi Arabia, which, and they're probably right, based on some things that I read.

Now we get back to Abraham and Sarah as we finish out the chapter. *“²² At that time Abimelech (remember him? Guy who got kind of dealt a bad deal by Abraham) and Phicol the commander of his army said to Abraham, “God is with you in all that you do. ²³ Now therefore swear to me here by God that you will not deal falsely with me (which Abraham had already done, by the way. So he's saying, swear to me you're never going to do that again) or with my descendants or with my posterity, but as I have dealt kindly with you, so you will deal with me and with the land where you have sojourned.”*

So what's going on here? Well, Abimelech is an observant man and he has observed that Abraham is living under the blessing of God and he knows that because of that, Abraham has become a very powerful man. And when you

have a king who has a very powerful man who has given an invitation to stay in his region, in his kingdom, that man is naturally going to become a threat.

So he asks Abraham to kind of make this non-aggression pact, a covenant, if you will, a covenant of peace with the people of Gerar. ²⁴ *And Abraham said, "I will swear."* And you know, this was actually a good idea on Abimelech's part. So Abraham..., so they did that.

²⁵ *When Abraham reproved Abimelech about a well of water that Abimelech's servants had seized,* ²⁶ *Abimelech said, "I do not know who has done this thing; you did not tell me, and I have not heard of it until today."* Which is totally understandable, because if you've ever been a leader of anything, you know that leaders are the last people to find out about everything. Maybe you don't know that, but I'm telling you it's true, so I can relate to Abimelech.

He's like, I didn't hear about this, I didn't know anything about this, what are you talking about? Well, there's this well of water and I dug it, me and my men, but your servants, your people have, have they been, they've been saying, no, that's our well and it's not your well.

And so verse 27, *"So Abraham took sheep and oxen and gave them to Abimelech, and the two men made a covenant."* And so this is the making of the non-aggression pact. And then, ²⁸ *Abraham set seven ewe lambs of the flock apart."* And that means, set apart, that means they were not part of the covenant of peace. So which is the reason why Abimelech now comes to Abraham in verse 29.

And he says, okay, " ... *"What is the meaning of these seven ewe lambs that you have set apart?"* (I thought we already made our deal. And) ³⁰ *He (Abraham) said, "These seven ewe lambs you will take from my hand, that this may be a witness for me that I dug this well."* So basically Abraham is getting Abimelech in the receiving of these lambs, essentially to declare that the well belonged to Abraham in the presence of his commander and they probably brought other servants as well.

And then it goes on in verse 31 to say, *"Therefore that place was called Beersheba, (or in the original Hebrew, Beersheva) because there both of them swore an oath."* ³² *So they made a covenant at Beersheba. Then Abimelech and Phicol the commander of his army rose up and returned to the land of the Philistines."* By the way, once again, if you, again, get onto Google Maps and just put in, Beersheba, you will be shown a city. In fact, it's a city of over, 200,000 people. So it's not a small town, it's a big city. In fact, it is, the largest

city in the Negev, which is, that region is still called, the Negev. But what you will also find out if you do a little more digging, is that the present city of Beersheba is about 2 and a ½ miles away from the ancient well where Abraham and Abimelech made their covenant.

So the city is a distance away, but pretty close actually. The chapter ends with verse 33 saying, *“Abraham planted a tamarisk tree in Beersheba and called there on the name of the Lord, the Everlasting God.”* I suppose there was probably some kind of significance to his planting of a tamarisk tree, I don't really know what it was though. I do know this, I know tamarisk trees take a lot of water and they take a long time to grow, so you can make of that what you will.

But it says, *“³⁴ And Abraham sojourned many days in the land of the Philistines.”* And I can understand why, I mean, Abraham and Abimelech had sworn peace to one another. It's understandable that Abraham would want to settle there for a while and just enjoy the peace, you know. Hey, we got peace between the guy who rules this area, why get up and move into another area where there may not be peace, let's just hang tough here for a while and that's what they did. And that's where we're going to stop for tonight and we will pick it up in chapter 22 next time. And it gets even better as far as the narrative. So anyway, let's pray.

Jesus, thank you so much for giving us your Holy Spirit and imparting to us the wisdom and insight that comes from you whenever we study together the scriptures. Thank you, Lord, for the pictures that you've planted for us in the Old Testament that give clarity and highlight the truths of the New Testament.

Thank you, Lord, for the picture of Isaac and his birth which was nothing short of miraculous and was the result of a promise to show us that we who have been born into the kingdom of God by faith are a fulfillment of that picture, that picture of a child born through promise. And I thank you for that Lord, because your promises are sure and that's not the only promise that you have given to us, your children, you've given us many more. And I pray my Father, God, that we would cling to those promises and reject the testimony of circumstances in favor of believing you above all things. Thank you for your Word, thank you for nourishing us with your Word.

Thank you for allowing us the privilege of gathering together as the body of Christ. We thank you and praise you, in Jesus precious name and all God's people said, amen.

God bless you. Have a good rest of your evening.