

- I. Jesus tells us all to read the OT. The Story Arc of the Bible is the rescue of the fallen world through the Seed of Abraham.**
- A. Genesis 12. God intends to rescue it from evil, death, sin, through Abe's seed.
1. God will use humans to save the world, but humans can't be loyal enough to do it. *This is the dilemma of the entire OT*
- B. Genesis 15. God reiterates his covenant with Abram and explains that God himself will accomplish it..
1. Amazingly, only God himself takes the maledictory oath.
 - a) God takes on this curse unilaterally and declares Abram righteous by simple faith in God's promise. Rom.4:6
 2. *This becomes the basis of all salvation—God pays personally for man's sin because humans cannot and will not save themselves from God's judgment.*
- II. But the challenges are not over. Gen. 16. Attempts to help God out...?**
- A. The situation seems dire. 1**
1. Abraham is 85, Sarai is 75, they have been in the land 10 years.
 - a) They still don't have a child. This is the biggest problem for them.
 2. God has appeared to Abram and re-stated the covenant, ratifying it dramatically (but he didn't appear to Sarai)
 3. But there was a small loop hole. God had said that the child would be from Abram's body, but He had not mentioned Sarah's body specifically.
 4. *Could Abram father a child by another woman and fulfill the promise that way?*
- B. Sarah's plan seems plausible. 2**
1. Her idea was legal, plausible, and doable, *but it shifted faith from God to Man.*
 - a) Surrogate motherhood was a common solution to childlessness.
 - b) Polygamy was tolerable, though not ideal, in the OT
 2. Her theology is as good as Abe's (see 15:3) They knew that the Lord was behind this difficulty.
 - a) She says that God has prevented her from pregnancy, which was true.
 3. But her methodology was not. *Abe complained to God, Sarah complained to Abraham.*
- C. But it results in immediate and chronic trauma. 4-7 (Polygamy always did)**
1. Hagar becomes arrogant and abusive. 4
 - a) She "looked with contempt" "disdained"
 - b) This is what got her in trouble, not just having the baby.
 - c) *Sometimes our "victimization" is our own fault and we won't face it.*
 2. Sarah blames Abram for the whole mess. 5
 - a) Wives:
 - (1) *Understand the influence you have on the men in your lives.*
 3. Abram fails to step up. 6
 - a) *He does almost nothing wise in this situation.*
- D. So, the Angel of the Lord steps in to navigate it. 7-16**
1. He is probably the pre-incarnate Christ (Jn.1:14-18)
 - a) Traditional view (Mathews, NAC, Genesis, p.189; Also, ZPEB)
 2. He demonstrates personal grace and care toward Hagar.
 - a) He meets her personally at the point of her despair. Ps.34:18
 - b) He promises her a son (a great blessing)
 - c) He promises her a great nation. 10. Multitude
 - (1) Expanded in 21:18. A great nation.
 - d) He names her son: Ishmael = God hears.
 - (1) Again, a blessing for God to pick Ishmael's name.
 - e) *But tells her to abide by the original arrangement, to submit to Sarai.*
 - (1) And he has a plan for Ishmael because he is Abraham's son.

3. She is amazed that the Angel of YHWH has appeared to her.
 - a) He did not appear to Sarai or talk to her. Hagar sees this as a real blessing and is deeply encouraged.
 - (1) She calls the Lord “the One who sees me” or “God of seeing”
 - (2) “The well of the Living One who sees me”
4. She obeys the Lord, even though returning to Sarai is difficult. (1Pet.2:18-23)
 - a) But stress continues. Even 15 years later there is tension. 21:8-14

E. The whole thing was a flesh-detour, but God uses all of it.

III. Thoughts on navigating faithful struggles in a fallen world. Inevitable! What to do?

1. Many people blame God for not making life easier...
 - a) Why didn't God explain more to Abe and Sarai?
 - (1) If God would just explain himself, we would be more faithful...or would we...? Is not faithfulness demonstrated with we do not get an explanation and we need to trust his promises instead of our own insight? (2 Cor.5:7)
 - b) Why did God wait so long in the first place.
 - (1) This puts undue stress on us!
 - c) Why did God allow this situation with Hagar?
 - (1) He could have appeared to Abe or Sarai and avoided all of this.

IV. Or we can trust God... How? Three suggestions

- A. **Trust Providence:** Assume that God knows what he's doing and try to live responsibly and faithfully.
 1. God uses human decisions (even bad ones) to bring about his plan for the world. (compatibilism)
 - a) This is a mystery to us, but the Bible tells us it is true. Gen.45:8; 50:20; Acts 2:23
 2. So, He doesn't prevent all our mistakes, but he lets us learn from them:
 - a) All the Wisdom Literature is focused on this sort of living.
 3. Because His goal for us is not an easy life in a fallen world, but wisdom and maturity in Him.
Rom.8:28-29
 - a) *That we should be conformed to the image of His Son...*
 4. He teaches us at least two things through mistakes (and even sins)
 - a) Humility: ever known a person who thinks they never made a mistake? They are insufferable, because that thought is itself a mistake.
 - b) Wisdom: Failure and Sorrow, touched by Grace = wisdom
- B. **Cultivate Patience:** God's timing is always a problem for us. (2 Pet.3:3-9)
 1. Patience is not indolence, laziness, passivity, or inactivity.
 - a) *It is an inner poise in the midst of even a hectic life. Phil.4:5-6*
 2. God usually lets things get really bad, the point of despair.
 3. Humans need to come to an end of themselves.
- C. **Live in the Promise:** Abraham (and Sarah's) Seed was based on God's Word of Grace and Promise. This is how all salvation happens. Trust God's Promise. Gal.4:21-31
 1. Paul uses this story to illustrate precisely this point—the flesh (keeping the Law) cannot bring us into eternal life! Gal.3:18, 22-29
 2. Living in the Promise means coming to Jesus the Messiah, the Seed of Abraham—becoming Abraham's real offspring into the new creation.
 3. Taking His Word for things. Continuing to walk with the Lord, navigating the traumas and dilemmas of life by trusting Him, living in his love and grace in the New Covenant.