

Genesis 2022 #18 (11.13.22) #22091

Genesis 21

Isaac and the Grace of God

I. God is saving the world from sin and death through the Seed of Abraham. Gen.12:1-3; 15:1-21

- A. Genesis 12-50 is the beginning of the growth of the Seed into the nation.
- B. After 25 mysterious and stressful years, finally the Seed is here: Isaac is born!
- C. But the blessing raises questions: what about Ishmael? And what about the Land?

II. God is providentially at work...

A. He fulfills the promise of Isaac (the Seed). 1-8

- 1. God's Word is absolutely reliable.
 - a) Even when we have trouble trusting and enduring.
 - b) 25 years of living on a promise.
- 2. Obedience follows grace.
 - a) Abe circumcises Isaac, keeping covenant with the Lord.
 - b) It does not produce the grace, but it does follow it.
- 3. They weaned their kids at about 3.
 - a) They believed that the longer they nursed them, the stronger they would be.

B. He focuses the promise through Isaac (not Ishmael) 9-21

- 1. He uses the human stress to protect the divine promise (seed of Abe). 8-12
 - a) Ishmael mocks Isaac and Sarah again wants Hagar out of the nest.
 - (1) Sarah is largely responsible for this mess. She is the one who suggested Hagar in the first place.
 - (2) But so is Hagar, who disdained Sarah publicly and may have taught Ishmael the same disdain for Sarah and now for Isaac.
 - b) Abe is angry/grieved/distressed because he loves Ishmael.
 - (1) But Sarah is actually correct in the fact that Isaac will be the recipient of the family fortune and promise.
 - c) *Look how dysfunctional human life generally is!! And God still works with us!*
- 2. He rescues Abraham by telling him to let go of Ishmael. 13
 - a) Abraham probably would not have done it if the Lord hadn't told him to.
 - b) *Rescued in the sense that the distress Abraham felt was eased by knowing that God was in the situation and Abe was obeying Him.*
- 3. He rescues Ishmael and Hagar. 15-20
 - a) *But waits until Ishmael cries out to Him. (Waltke)*
 - b) *The well was there, but hidden from her sight. She needed the crisis in order to deal with God*
- 4. He blesses Ishmael and his Egyptian wife. 21
 - a) All the Arab nations come from him. Gen. 17:20, 12 princes
 - b) *God knows what He is doing with the human population.*

C. He insures a place in the Land for Isaac. 22-34

- 1. He affirms a treaty with the Philistines. 22-24
 - a) Multi-generational=safety for Isaac, for the Seed Promise.
 - b) Beersheba was Isaac's home for most of his life. (180 years)
 - c) Abraham's inheritance from the Lord is secure. Gen.12:1-3
- 2. He makes the Beersheba Covenant. 25-32.
 - a) Beersheba = "Well of the Oath" or "Well of the Seven"
- 3. He worships the Lord as a sojourner in Philistine territory. 33-34
 - a) *A sojourner in the land of the Philistines? Living, but not owning...*

III. What do we learn here: Isaac is the picture of God's Grace in Action.

- A. The Lord saves us based on His Promise (Grace), not our obedience (Law). 1-7. (Gal.3:18)
 - 1. Isaac was the Grace Gift to Abraham's ruptured and dysfunctional family.
 - a) The only perfect person is Jesus. All our lives are more or less fractured
 - 2. *Which means...*
- B. We obey not to earn salvation, but because we really do trust the Lord. 14
 - 1. Bonhoeffer said, only those who believe (trust) obey and only those who obey believe (trust).
 - 2. Abe obeyed here and later because he believed God's Word and trusted God personally.
 - 3. A step of faith for Abraham...stepping back...letting God care for Hagar and Ishmael.
- C. And we see ourselves as redemptive Expats in a fallen culture. 1 Pet.1:1-2
 - 1. Why insert the account of the Beersheba Treaty?
 - a) To remind us that Abraham was a "sojourner" an "alien/expat" in the promised land, *yet still a significant player in the world and an heir of God's promise.*
 - 2. **We are expats here, who will inherit a new world eventually.** Hebrews 11:11-16.
 - a) Looking past this city and at the city to come.
 - b) *If we don't feel like expats, something is wrong...we are too comfortable in the world. (1Jn.2:15-17)*
 - c) *But if we don't live redemptively in the world something is also wrong! We are not salt and light! (Jn.3:16; Matt.5:13-16)*
 - d) *Do I really belong here? Yes and No. And we must live in this tension.*

IV. How to we trust God today? Gal.3:23-29

- A. By resting in the Grace that comes through Faith in Abraham's Seed--Christ.
- B. *The whole point of the Isaac story is that the salvation of the world and the salvation of us along with it, is a divine miracle brought about by God through His Son in order to redeem the World, completely apart from the failings of fallen humans. This is Gospel.*