

# **Second Baptist Church of Doylestown**

## **Bible Study Notes**

### **10-9-19**

#### **Genesis 21**

##### **The Birth of Isaac - Verses 1-7**

<sup>1</sup> Now the LORD was gracious to Sarah as he had said, and the LORD did for Sarah what he had promised. <sup>2</sup> Sarah became pregnant and bore a son to Abraham in his old age, at the very time God had promised him. <sup>3</sup> Abraham gave the name Isaac to the son Sarah bore him. <sup>4</sup> When his son Isaac was eight days old, Abraham circumcised him, as God commanded him. <sup>5</sup> Abraham was a hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him. <sup>6</sup> Sarah said, "God has brought me laughter, and everyone who hears about this will laugh with me." <sup>7</sup> And she added, "Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? Yet I have borne him a son in his old age."

**21:1-3** God is faithful; and His work is done in faithfulness. All that He has spoken shall come to pass; all that He has promised shall be fulfilled. We know people change all the times. Sometimes they don't feel like being willing to keep their promises; sometimes, due to circumstances, they are simply not capable in keeping them. Not so with God. He does keep His Word. All the promises He has made in the Bible will be fulfilled in the end, for He is not only sovereignly willing, but also sovereignly capable.

**21:1-6** Who could believe that Abraham would have a son at 100 years of age—and live to raise him to adulthood? But doing the impossible is everyday business for God. Our big problems won't seem so impossible if we let God handle them.

**21:7** After repeated promises, a visit by two angels, and the appearance of the Lord himself, Sarah finally cried out with surprise and joy at the birth of her son. Because of her doubt, worry, and fear, she had forfeited the peace she could have felt in God's wonderful promise to her. The way to bring peace to a troubled heart is to focus on God's promises. Trust him to do what he says.

##### **Hagar and Ishmael Sent Away - Verses 8-21**

<sup>8</sup> The child grew and was weaned, and on the day Isaac was weaned Abraham held a great feast. <sup>9</sup> But Sarah saw that the son whom Hagar the Egyptian had borne to Abraham was mocking, <sup>10</sup> and she said to Abraham, "Get rid of that slave woman and her son, for that woman's son will never share in the inheritance with my son Isaac."

<sup>11</sup> The matter distressed Abraham greatly because it concerned his son. <sup>12</sup> But God said to him, "Do not be so distressed about the boy and your slave woman. Listen to whatever Sarah tells you, because it is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned. <sup>13</sup> I will make the son of the slave into a nation also, because he is your

offspring.”<sup>14</sup> Early the next morning Abraham took some food and a skin of water and gave them to Hagar. He set them on her shoulders and then sent her off with the boy. She went on her way and wandered in the Desert of Beersheba.<sup>15</sup> When the water in the skin was gone, she put the boy under one of the bushes.<sup>16</sup> Then she went off and sat down about a bowshot away, for she thought, “I cannot watch the boy die.” And as she sat there, she began to sob.<sup>17</sup> God heard the boy crying, and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven and said to her, “What is the matter, Hagar? Do not be afraid; God has heard the boy crying as he lies there.<sup>18</sup> Lift the boy up and take him by the hand, for I will make him into a great nation.”<sup>19</sup> Then God opened her eyes and she saw a well of water. So she went and filled the skin with water and gave the boy a drink.<sup>20</sup> God was with the boy as he grew up. He lived in the desert and became an archer.<sup>21</sup> While he was living in the Desert of Paran, his mother got a wife for him from Egypt.

**21:8** All was not well in Abraham's household even though God had provided the heir. Ishmael was a potential rival to Isaac's inheritance. Normally in ancient Near Eastern culture the son of a concubine became the heir of his mother but not of his father (cf. Judges 9:1-3). Now that Abraham had a son by his wife, Sarah did not want Ishmael to share Isaac's inheritance.

**21: 9-10** We are to practice the principle found in Galatians 4:30 and 5:16 by continually casting out the flesh and walking in the Spirit. Avoid putting yourself in situations where it is easy to give in to the flesh. What are you watching on TV? What are you reading? With whom are you associating? Walk in the Spirit by reading and watching and doing things that help you mature in Christ.

**21:11-12** Ishmael despised Isaac as Hagar had despised Sarai ( Genesis 16:4). Abraham understandably felt distressed by this situation since he loved Ishmael as well as Isaac (cf. Genesis 17:18). God appeared to him again (the seventh revelation) to assure Abraham that Sarah's desire was in harmony with His will (cf. Genesis 17:19-21

**21:17-21** When in need, remember Hagar. Lost in the wilderness with no water and no hope for the future, God saw her condition and heard her cries. God opened Hagar's eyes and showed her water, and gave her strength and promises...and a command, which she obeyed. Do you have needs right now? As with Hagar, God hears your cries and can meet your needs.

**21:18** What happened to Ishmael, and who are his descendants? Ishmael became ruler of a large tribe or nation. Ishmael became the father of 12 sons ( Genesis 25:13-16) as Jacob did. From his sons came the Arab nations that have ever since been the chief antagonists of the Israelites. The Ishmaelites were nomads living in the Desert of Paran, south of Israel. One of Ishmael's daughters married Esau, Ishmael's nephew (28:9). The Bible pictures the Ishmaelites as hostile to Israel and to God (Psalm 83:5-6).

## The Treaty at Beersheba - Verses 22-34

<sup>22</sup> At that time Abimelek and Phicol the commander of his forces said to Abraham, "God is with you in everything you do. <sup>23</sup> Now swear to me here before God that you will not deal falsely with me or my children or my descendants. Show to me and the country where you now reside as a foreigner the same kindness I have shown to you." <sup>24</sup> Abraham said, "I swear it." <sup>25</sup> Then Abraham complained to Abimelek about a well of water that Abimelek's servants had seized. <sup>26</sup> But Abimelek said, "I don't know who has done this. You did not tell me, and I heard about it only today." <sup>27</sup> So Abraham brought sheep and cattle and gave them to Abimelek, and the two men made a treaty. <sup>28</sup> Abraham set apart seven ewe lambs from the flock, <sup>29</sup> and Abimelek asked Abraham, "What is the meaning of these seven ewe lambs you have set apart by themselves?" <sup>30</sup> He replied, "Accept these seven lambs from my hand as a witness that I dug this well." <sup>31</sup> So that place was called Beersheba, because the two men swore an oath there. <sup>32</sup> After the treaty had been made at Beersheba, Abimelek and Phicol the commander of his forces returned to the land of the Philistines. <sup>33</sup> Abraham planted a tamarisk tree in Beersheba, and there he called on the name of the LORD, the Eternal God. <sup>34</sup> And Abraham stayed in the land of the Philistines for a long time.

**21:22** Since Abraham had become a powerful individual in the land by God's blessing, Abimelech initiated a bilateral treaty with him for his own protection. This was evidently the same Abimelech that Abraham had dealt with previously (ch20).

**21:31** Beersheba, the southernmost city of Israel, lay on the edge of a vast wilderness that stretched as far as Egypt to the southwest and Mount Sinai to the south. The area described as being from Dan in the north to Beersheba in the south was often used to describe the traditional boundaries of the Promised Land (2 Samuel 17:11; 2 Chronicles 30:5). Beersheba's southern location and the presence of several wells in the area may explain why Abraham settled there. Beersheba was also the home of Isaac, Abraham's son.

**21:33** By planting a tree Abraham indicated his determination to stay in that region. Tamarisk trees (Genesis 21:33) were long-lived and evergreen. This tree was an appropriate symbol of the enduring grace of the faithful God whom Abraham recognized as "the Everlasting God" (El Olam). Abraham now owned a small part of the land God had promised him.

Even through this time of conflict in his family and among his neighbors, Abraham kept a real, live walk with God. Conflict did not drive him away from God, but he allowed it to push him closer to the LORD.