

March 29th, 2020
 Isaac and Ishmael
 Genesis 21:1-21

BIBLE IN A YEAR READING PLAN

Mar 22 Judges 10-12	Mar 26 Ruth 1-4
Mar 23 Judges 13-15	Mar 27 1 Sam. 1-3
Mar 24 Judges 16-18	Mar 28 1 Sam. 4-8
Mar 25 Judges 19-21	Mar 29 1 Sam. 9-12

Lesson Introduction: *Abraham and Sarah waited quite some time to see the promise of an heir fulfilled. In fact, they waited 25 years from the time the Lord first appeared to Abraham. Our passage today shows us that God is faithful to keep His promises, and that He is able to overcome any obstacle to do so. We will also see how the Lord sovereignly reigns over the messes of our life and works all things for the good of His people. Lastly, we will see how God cares deeply for the vulnerable and downtrodden.*

FOUNDATIONAL TRUTHS:

- **The Lord fulfills His promises (V. 1-7)**
- **There is no circumstance that the Lord cannot overcome (V. 1-7)**
- **All circumstances are in the sovereign hands of God (V. 8-14)**
- **The Lord cares for the lowly and downtrodden (V. 15-21)**

Discussion Section 1: Standing on the Promises of God

Read Genesis 21:1-7

1 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. **3** Abraham called the name of his son who was born to him, whom Sarah bore him, Isaac. **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. **6** And Sarah said, "God has made laughter for me; everyone who hears will laugh over me." **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."

-What emphasis is the writer making in **verses 1 and 2**?

-What do we learn about the power of God in this section?

- What are some of your favorite promises of God, and how have you seen God be faithful to His promises in your life?

Note: *Since the beginning of Genesis chapter 12 we have seen that God promised Abraham and Sarah that they would have a child, and that God would make from Abraham a great nation. Throughout these last several chapters it was clear that Abraham and Sarah both really doubted at times whether God would make good on His promise, and they even sought to take matters into their own hands at times. But through it all, God had a plan, and in our passage today, Abraham and Sarah finally see God fulfil the beginning of the promise.*

*As we consider the nature of this promise, we should be stunned. What God promised to do was nothing short of miraculous. People as old as Abraham and Sarah were do not have kids, much less people who have been barren their entire lives. God made an impossible promise, and then He kept it as only He could. The way God chose to begin the creation of His holy people (through an old man and a barren old woman) shows that the power belongs completely to Him (**1 Corinthians 1:26-30, 2 Corinthians 4:5-7**). This passage teaches us that nothing is difficult for God, and that His plan will be accomplished, and His promises kept just as He says they will.*

*The New Testament teaches us that, just as Abraham was able to take God's promises to the bank, so are we. **1 Corinthians 1:20-22** tells us, "For all the promises of God find their Yes in him. That is why it is through him that we utter our Amen to God for his glory. And it is God who establishes us with you in Christ, and has anointed us, and who has also put his seal on us and given us his Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee." God chose Abraham to be His child, and to make out of him a great nation. He has chosen us to be His children and established us as such in Christ, sealing us with the Spirit. Because that is true, God's promises are "yes" for us! Take a moment to consider some of God's promises and*

celebrate the fact that we can rely fully on them if we are in Christ!

Discussion Section 2: Lord Over All

Read Genesis 21:8-14

8 And the child grew and was weaned. 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. 10 So she 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." 11 And the thing was very displeasing to Abraham on account of his son. 12 But God said to Abraham, "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. 13 And I will make a nation of the son of the slave woman also, because he is your offspring." 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.

-Why did Sarah want Hagar and Ishmael cast out? (V. 9)

-What does the Lord's response to Sarah's request tell us about Him? (V. 12-13)

-How have you seen God work through difficult circumstances in your life?

Note: *The sins of Abraham and Sarah continue to cause problems for their family. We have already seen how Abraham's decision (at the suggestion of his wife) to have a child by Hagar caused problems between Sarah and her servant in an earlier chapter (Ch. 16). Now, even after Sarah is given a son of her own, we find out that the resentment still lingers. This is a good reminder that our sins cause ripple effects. We are never just hurting ourselves when we sin, but our sin has great affect on the lives of others. In this case, we see how the sins of Abraham and Sarah result in something that looks horrible for Hagar and her son.*

Amazingly, even as we see Sarah treating Hagar and Ishmael terribly, it is clear that God is still completely in control of the situation. He is the one who permits Abraham to go forward with what Sarah has asked Him

to do. This does not mean that God approved of Sarah's sin or caused her to sin (James 1:13-14), rather what we are to glean from this is that there is nothing that happens that is not first sifted through the hands of God (Job 1:6-12), and that God even uses our sin to accomplish His purposes (Genesis 50:20). What we see is that God has a plan in all of this. He is not taken off guard by Sarah and Abraham's sin, but rather, He has planned to use it to make another great nation from Abraham's line.

What a great comfort it should be for us, that even when we have been wronged, we can trust God is at work. There is no situation that comes our way that God has not seen, planned, and is not working through. While things may seem chaotic in our world right now, and some of us may be concerned about what the future holds, God is not concerned at all. He takes the things that look like messes to us and weaves them all together for our good (Romans 8:28). Perhaps you have been wronged like Hagar and Ishmael in your past, and you are still wondering why you have been through what you have been through. Take heart, for God has been over all the circumstances of your life, and He will do what is best, for His glory and your good. We will see in our final section how God does not abandon us in our distress, but hears us, and works on our behalf to bring about good.

Discussion Section 3: God's Kindness to The Lowly

Read Genesis 21:15-21

15 When the water in the skin was gone, she put the child under one of the bushes. 16 Then she went and sat down opposite him a good way off, about the distance of a bowshot, 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. 17 And God heard the voice of the boy, 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. 20 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.

-What does this section tell us about what our response should be when we face dire situations? (**V. 16-17**)

-What do we learn in this passage about God's view of the downtrodden?

-How should God's mercy toward those in desperate situations shape the way we interact with those in great need?

Note: *Our passage closes with a beautiful picture of God's compassion for the lowly and downtrodden. This is not the first time that Hagar has found herself in the wilderness because of trouble with her mistress Sarah (**Ch. 16**). Here is a slave woman, forced to marry and conceive for her mistress' husband, now being cast out into the wilderness with the son that she conceived for him. This was a situation that was completely out of her control, yet she finds herself desperate and ready to die. All she was able to do at that point was separate herself from her son because she could not stand to watch him die, and then weep aloud and cry out in a loud voice (**V. 16**). It was here that the Lord met her and promised good for her and her son.*

*Just as He did in **16:7-15**, the Lord once again saw and heard Hagar and her son (**V. 17-18**). The Lord shows us again that He is not a god who turns his back on the lowly and distressed, rather, He is the God Who sees, hears, and provides for the downtrodden. In **Matthew 5:1-12**, Jesus begins His famous Sermon on the Mount by speaking about the **poor in spirit, those who mourn, the meek, those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, and those who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness**. He states that those are the types of people who are blessed because they are the ones who God comforts, fills, and gives the Kingdom of Heaven to! Jesus came not for the well, but the sick (needy sinners) (**Mark 2:17**). The story of Hagar and Ishmael desperate in the wilderness should serve as a reminder to us of our desperate need for a Savior. God saw us in our desperate state, heard our cries, and has graciously done good for us.*

As we close out this lesson, may we consider how God's grace toward us while we were in our lowly state should impact the way we treat the lowly and oppressed in our society. As people who have been seen and heard by God, we should be quick to look for and listen to those who are in need. Perhaps God might make us to be a well of water to someone who finds themselves in a dry and

*weary place. And maybe in that moment we might be able to point them to the Living Water, who will quench their thirst forever! (**John 4:10-13; 7:37-39**)*