

January 11

Scriptures: Read Genesis 20 & 21

Key Verse: “And the Lord visited Sarah as he had said, and the Lord did for Sarah as He had spoken.” (Genesis 21:1)

Overview

Abraham traveled south and sojourned in Gerar, a Philistine city about 40 miles west of Hebron, near the coast of the Mediterranean sea. We are not given the reason for his move, but it may have been to find better pastures for his great flocks of livestock to graze.

Once again, Abraham goes through the same kind of experience as he did when he went to Egypt (Gen. 12:10-20). He had not learned his lesson, and so he repeated the same lie that Sarah was his sister. Later he explained to the king that she was his half sister, daughter of his father, but not a daughter of his mother. However, this is no excuse: a half truth is still a lie. In those days it was allowed to marry a half sister, but later on it was forbidden (Lev. 18:9, 20:17, Deut. 27:22). Again, Abraham feared that they would kill him in order to take his beautiful wife. Sarah must have been extremely beautiful for even in her old age she attracted kings and they desired her. God, however, once again protected her purity by warning King committing such a sin that he arose early to obey the instructions the Lord had given him. With wisdom and calmness, he rebuked Abraham and yet still showed him respect as a prophet of God. Abraham had been the cause of the trouble and so he prayed that God would heal the closed wombs of the women in Abimelech’s household and God answered his prayer. Again, the situation turned out for Abraham’s good, for the king gave him livestock, servants, and silver along with the permission to dwell anywhere he pleased on the king’s land.

God is always faithful, and what He promises we can be confident He will do. Sarah and Abraham, although in their old age, did indeed have the child of promise. God’s faithfulness was clearly manifested in the arrival of that long awaited day. The real heir from the free woman was born when Abraham was 100 and Sarah was 90. What a miracle! Nothing is impossible with God. They obeyed the Lord, naming Him “Isaac” which means “laughter”, for they were both filled with great joy.

Ishmael, however, was filled with jealousy, even to the point of mocking Isaac and, as the Apostle Paul says, “Persecuting” him. In Galatians 4:21-31 Paul has drawn an interesting allegory about these two sons of Abraham. The one “born according to the flesh”, Ishmael, represents the Mosaic covenant of grace which is for Christians, who are children of the promise. “We are not the children of the bondwoman (representing the Old Testament Law) but of the free” (Gal. 4:31)

Abraham, a loving father, was grieved to hear Sarah’s request that Ishmael, now 14 years old, and his mother Hagar be cast out. God, however, showed this to be His will, so Abraham yielded to her wishes. This was necessary for the establishment of Isaac in the rights and privileges of the covenant.

For the second time, God graciously heard Hagar's distress and sent an angel to comfort her. Even though Hagar was not from the people of the covenant, He still took care of her and her son Ishmael, whom He had promised to bless.

When God makes a promise, we can be confident that He will accomplish it, and we can trust Him to visit us in our time of need. "By faith Sarah herself also received strength to conceive seed, and she bore a child when she was past the age, because she judged Him faithful who had promised" (Hebrews 11:11).

Prayer

Lord God, as You heard the boy Ishmael and the weeping of his mother, even so we come to You now for deliverance from all those things that would destroy us. Thank You for Your compassion.