

The Birth of Isaac

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[0 : 00] But if you have a Bible, then you can open to Genesis chapter 21, and I think it's actually page 21 as well in the church Bible if you have one of those.

And I'm only going to read and focus today on the first 21 verses. So let me start reading in chapter 21, verse 1.

Now the Lord was gracious to Sarah as he had said, and the Lord did for Sarah what he had promised. Sarah became pregnant and bore a son to Abraham in his old age, at the very time God had promised him.

Abraham gave the name Isaac to the son Sarah bore him. When his son Isaac was eight days old, Abraham circumcised him as God commanded him.

Abraham was a hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him. Sarah said, God has brought me laughter, and everyone who hears about this will laugh with me.

[1 : 02] 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. The child grew and was weaned, and on the day Isaac was weaned, Abraham held a great feast.

But Sarah saw that the son whom Hagar the Egyptian had borne to Abraham was mocking. And she said to Abraham, get rid of that slave woman and her son, for that slave woman's son will never share in the inheritance with my son Isaac.

The matter distressed Abraham greatly because it concerned his son. But God said to him, do not be so distressed about the boy and your maidservant.

Listen to whatever Sarah tells you, because it is true, Isaac, that your offspring will be reckoned. I will make the son of the maidservant into a nation also, because he is your offspring.

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.

[2 : 12] When the water in the skin was gone, she put the boy under one of the bushes. Then she went off and sat down nearby about a bow shot away, for she thought, I cannot watch the boy die.

And as she sat there nearby, she began to sob. God heard the boy crying, and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven and said to her, What's the matter, Hagar?

Don't be afraid. God has heard the boy crying as he lies there. Lift the boy up and take him by the hand, for I will make him into a great nation.

Then God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water. So she went, and she filled the skin with water and gave the boy a drink. God was with the boy as he grew up.

He lived in the desert, and he became an archer. While he was living in the desert of Paran, his mother got a wife for him from Egypt. So Father, just as we come to your word this morning, God, in this brief time together, God, would you help us to see, would you give us eyes to see and ears to hear from your word, and would you encourage and also challenge our hearts in how we view you as our God and as our Savior, and also how we are called to respond to you in our lives day by day.

[3 : 41] So help us now, and would your Holy Spirit work in us, I pray. Amen. Well, very, this morning, I have simply two questions to ask as we look at this passage.

Two very, very simple questions. And firstly, the first one is, what does this passage tell us about God and the promises that he makes to us?

And then secondly, what effect do these promises have or should have on his people's lives, on our lives today? So what does it tell us about God, about who he is, when he keeps his promises?

And what effect should this have on how we live out our lives day by day? So the first question, what does this passage tell us about God?

As we see the birth of Isaac and his whole promise being fulfilled. And first of all, we see straight away in verse 1, we see that it happens just as God says it's going to happen.

[4 : 53] Look at verse 1 again. It says that the Lord was gracious to Sarah as he had said, and the Lord did for Sarah what he had promised. So we see twice, two times there, he says, as he said and what he had promised.

He did what he said he was going to do. And you know, we've seen over a number of chapters and probably over 15 years of Abram's life, all the way back to chapter 15.

God had come to Abram and promised Abram a son way, way back when Abram was about 85 years old. And Abram didn't know how it was going to happen.

He thought, look, my servant Eliezer is going to have to take over from me. But God says, no, it's not going to be your servant. He says, this man will not be an heir, but a son coming from your own body will be your heir.

And so he promised Abram there will be a son coming from your own body is going to take on after you. And we see, you know, as we as we move through the chapters, we saw that Abraham, he had faith at that point.

[6 : 09] But there were times where he didn't have faith and he he tried to do things and accomplish God's promise in his own way. And we saw that in the very next chapter, chapter 16.

He tries to him and Sarah try to do it their own way. And Abraham sleeps with Hagar and he has a son, Ishmael, through that.

And they think maybe that's the way God's promise is being fulfilled. But yet we see again and again in chapter 17 and again in 18, how God reminds Abraham, it's not true Ishmael is going to be, is not going to inherit after you.

It's I'm going to give you a son through you and through Sarah. Sarah is going to be the mother of many nations. And so he's reminded again and again.

And here, finally, in chapter 21, we see the promise being fulfilled. All those years and maybe doubts that Abraham had are now finally put to rest.

[7 : 12] And he sees God's promise being fulfilled in his own life. And it reminds us, I think, today that our God is the same. That if he says he's going to do something, then he's going to carry it out exactly how he says he wants to.

And when you read through the promises of the Bible, you see that again and again. You know, we see God says, I'm going to take care of you. In Philippians, my God will supply all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.

We've seen that. We were reading that in the Bible study a week or two ago, how God will take care of us, will look after us. We see that he brings comfort to us in our loneliness and in our distress in 2 Corinthians.

We read about in James how he humbles the proud, but he will give grace to those that are humble before him. And so we see, when we see God's promise being fulfilled in Abram's life and throughout the Bible, and then again in our own lives, doesn't it give you such confidence in God that he will, all the promises that he makes, he will bring them to fruition.

But not only does he say, do what he says he's going to do, but he also does them at exactly the time that he says that he wants to do them.

[8 : 37] And we read that here in verse 2 with the birth of Isaac. It says that Sarah became pregnant and bore a son to Abram in his old age, at the very time God had promised him.

And you see, you see this, you know, it didn't, this time when Isaac was born, it didn't sneak up on God and, you know, suddenly he thought, oh, I've forgotten all about Abram, you know, that's been 15 years ago, I've said to him I'm going to give him a son, I'd better start getting round to it.

It wasn't like that at all. God knew exactly the exact time of when it was going to happen. And it was all set out in God's perfect timing.

And it's so important to remember this point as well, that not only does he do what he says he's going to do, but he does it at the exact time that he wants to do it also.

And, you know, it applies from the very smallest things in life to the timing of a leaf falling off a tree in the autumn, to the timing of a baby being born, to the timing of a medical diagnosis, right the way up to the end of our lives, to the timing of when we pass from life into death.

[9 : 57] You know, we see again and again, God, he has things perfectly timed. And I'm sure when we look back in our lives, we can maybe in the moment we don't understand why did God allow this

or make this happen at this particular point in our lives.

But later on, as we look back, we can see God's timing and how perfect it was and how it made us grow in our faith in him and trust in him more.

But then as we see this, as we see God fulfilling his promise, as we see him fulfilling his promise at the very time that he wants to, what effect should this have on our lives?

And here, I think in this passage, you see five things, five effects that it has in Abram's life and that it can have in ours.

And first of all, you see that the first effect it has is it results in obedience. And we see God, as he gives the promise to Abram, he tells him to do two things.

[11:08] He says, you are to give him the name Isaac and you are to circumcise him on the eighth day. And what do we read in this passage?

As soon as Abram was born, we're told in verse three, Abraham gave the name Isaac to the son Sarah born him. And when his son Isaac was eight days old, Abraham circumcised him as God commanded him.

And we see, you know, as the promise has been fulfilled in Abram's life, he responds in obedience. And I think it, you know, it makes sense in some way, doesn't it?

When we see someone, when we see someone making a promise to us and they say, I'm going to do this for you. And they fulfill that promise. They do what they say they're going to do.

Doesn't it make you trust them more? You know, when they then ask you maybe to do something, doesn't it, when you've seen that they have actually kept to their word and done what they say, and you see that they're a trustworthy person, you are trusting of them.

[12:15] And when they ask you to do something, you will respond, I think, in an entrust and an obedience to them. And I think that gives us such motivation that when we see God working in our lives, when we see him keeping his promises, that should give us such motivation to obey his instructions, to trust him, that he knows what he's talking about, he knows what he's doing in our lives.

So firstly, it results in obedience, but then secondly, we see it results in praise, especially in verse six with Sarah. She says, God has brought me laughter and everyone who hears about this will laugh with me.

And Sarah, she saw God answering and keeping his promises. And her response to that is praise. And similarly, you know, when we see someone keep their promise, we praise them.

You know, we say, well done, thank you for keeping your word. Or we tell others about them and we praise them indirectly as well. We say, did you hear about that person and what they did?

And we praise that person for how they've done a good job or kept their promise or kept their word in some way or another. And I think so when we keep, when we see God keep his promises in our lives, our response is to be one of praise, but then also wonder.

[13:48] And that's the third effect you see down in verse seven. Sarah's response, she says, she adds, she says, who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children?

Yet I have born him a son in his old age. And Sarah, over the course of Abraham's life, we saw again and again how she laughed or how she didn't believe that God could give her a son because it, you know, it just seemed so impossible.

And it was, you know, humanly speaking, it was impossible for this to happen. And a woman of 90 years old to actually have a baby. I mean, if we were in her situation, we would probably, you know, laugh as well.

Just think, how is that actually possible? But when it actually happens and the baby is born, her response is one of wonder.

She is amazed at what God has done. And I suppose that's my hope as well for us this morning is that we would praise him, but we would also be filled with a sense of amazement and wonder at what God is doing and can do in our lives.

[15:04] Fourthly, then we see that sometimes God's promises, they cause us to have to make difficult choices. And we see that, you know, especially in verse 11.

And you have this whole scene of Isaac has been weaned and a big celebration thrown for him. And Ishmael is mocking in some way or another Isaac.

And he is told to send Ishmael and Hagar away. And it's probably not, I mean, look, think of it, I'm a father.

father, many of us here are fathers and have children. Imagine the pain of having to tell, he would have been maybe 15, 16, 17 years old at this stage, Ishmael, but having to tell him, you know, send him off with some bread and some water and tell him to go off into the desert.

You know, how hard and difficult a choice would that be to have to do that to one of your own children? And yet, he still obeyed God.

[16:09] He knew it was a difficult choice and in the next chapter we're going to see it again, another difficult choice. And when God's promises are fulfilled, sometimes there will be times where we have to make difficult choices and God brings these things before us and tells us, you know, we know what the right thing to do, but it won't always be the easiest thing to actually do in our lives.

But then finally, we see that it results in hope. You go down to verse 19 and Hagar and Ishmael, they've been sent off into the desert.

They have, in a sense, lost all hope. They have no idea what's going to happen and they've sat down there crying and then it says in verse 19 that God opened her eyes and she saw a well of water and so she went and she filled the skin with water and gave the boy a drink and God was with the boys he grew up.

And you know, those verses remind us that in the midst of, you know, hardship and after we've made those difficult choices, God will open her eyes and we saw that, we saw that in Hagar's life here.

We see how she was given hope at the very lowest maybe point of her life sitting down, crying, not knowing what she's going to do at all and yet God opens her eyes and he gives hope to her.

[17:49] And we see that as well in Abraham after the birth of Isaac, you know, and he sees God's promises being fulfilled. what hope that gives him. And I suppose so much more I could say but to bring all that together and to finish and to conclude it, when we see God's promises in our lives, there are so many effects that it can and it should have on each one of us, his children and it should fill us with hope and even during those difficult times where we struggle to maybe see God's promise being fulfilled or we have to make a difficult choice that we know is going to maybe hurt us maybe financially or relationally but we know it's what God wants us to do, then we should also know that behind that we have a God who gives us hope and a God who fulfills his promises and in response to that it helps us to trust him and to respond in obedience and praise and wonder at the amazing things that he does in our lives.

So let's just pray and then we will sing our final final song together. Father, we just come to you this morning and as we see from Abram's life all that you accomplished all through the years there must have been so many days where he wondered was this day ever actually going to come and yet we saw we see when he's 100 years old it is fulfilled.

Your word does come true and your word does come true at the appointed time at the very time you want it to happen and I pray that you would give us confidence this morning that as we go into a new week that God you are still the same God the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob the God who gives us confidence that what you've done in Abram's life you will also do in ours and the promises that you've made to each one of us that you will fulfill them in our lives too and as you fulfill your promises oh God would you help us to respond in obedience to your word would you help us to be filled with praise and wonder at the things that you do and would you fill us with hope hope in you and trust in your word oh God we ask these things in Jesus name Amen