

Genesis Ch21v1-21 - God's Promise, My Response

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- [0 : 00] Well, the arrival of a newborn baby, if that has been your experience, is no small thing. They have the habit of changing our lives and disrupting our schedules. Our whole life is turned upside down. Everything changes. It is amazing how such a tiny human being can cause such an upheaval. Well, the promised arrival of baby Isaac into the home of Mr. and Mrs. Abraham is no small thing. In fact, the birth of Isaac changes everything. It impacts the whole history of the world. It's a birth that demands a response from each one of us. You see, how we respond to the birth of Isaac will either lead to uncontainable joy or unimaginable misery.
- [1 : 07] Either uncontainable joy or unimaginable misery. So what I want us to do this morning is to look at the promise of God in chapter 21. And as we think about the promise, think about what our response to it is going to be. So first, big long titles this morning. Faith in God's promise leads to uncontainable joy. Faith in God's promise leads to uncontainable joy. You remember back in chapter 12, God had made the promise to Abraham. He says, I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you. And all peoples on the earth will be blessed through you. It was a promise that would restore broken lives and renew this disordered world. The problem was, Abraham and Sarah had no son. And no son meant no means of the blessing continuing.
- [2 : 15] In fact, they are now both very old. Abraham was about to celebrate his centenary and Sarah was hitting the big 9-0. The chances for them having a child and keeping the hope of blessing alive were as good as gone. But let's remember who made the promise. Look at 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. You see, what God said, God did. What God promised, God fulfilled. Now these kinds of things aren't supposed to happen. OAPs don't have babies. But that's precisely the point. With God, the impossible happens. God always delivers on his promise, even when we think it's dead and gone.
- [3 : 30] You see, God had promised to bless the nations of the world through the family line of Abraham. And God was determined to make sure that that promise would be fulfilled. That nothing and no one, not even an old age couple, would stop what God says he is going to do.

Now the promises are not just to be admired. They are promises that are to be believed. We could imagine the old couple, Sarah and Abraham, looking over their crib, cooing at baby Isaac as he gurgled away.

And with a big beaming smile, Sarah says, look at verse 6, God has brought me laughter. Of course, it's not the only time that Sarah laughed, is it?

Have a look back at chapter 18. Go back to chapter 18 in verse 12. Here Sarah has been promised that she will have a son.

[4 : 46] And look at her response, verse 12. So Sarah laughed to herself, as she thought, After I am worn out and my Lord is old, will I now have this pleasure?

Then the Lord said to Abraham, Why did Sarah laugh and say, Will I really have a child now that I'm old? Is anything too hard for the Lord?

I will return to you at the appointed time next year and Sarah will have a son. Go back to chapter 21. You see, there it was a laugh of doubt and disbelief.

You've got to be joking. That ain't possible. But now the possible has happened. The promise has been fulfilled. And Sarah laughs.

A laugh not of disbelief, But of sheer, uncontainable delight In what God has done. You see, deep down in the midst of all the doubting and wondering, There was a fragile faith.

[5 : 58] A faith not in her ability, But in God's ability to do great things. Now in chapter 21, It's perhaps hard for us to detect Where Sarah's faith is.

But scripture wants us to see Sarah's faith. The writer of Hebrews Records it for us. Can you follow there on the screen?

And by faith, Even Sarah, Who was past childbearing age, Was enabled to bear children Because she considered him faithful, Who had made the promise.

You see, Sarah's faith Is not a great faith Or a confident faith. It's a faith in the faithfulness of God.

You see, faith in God Enables Sarah to know The blessing that God had promised. Yes, Isaac was her son. She was delighted in having a son.

[7 : 02] But there was something bigger and greater Because through him Would come the greater and ultimate son, Jesus Christ, Who would come to restore the broken lives And renew this disordered world.

And now Sarah is beginning to have a taste. To share in the blessing of God. But what was Sarah's experience Can also be our experience.

Look at verse 6 again with me. Sarah said, God has brought me laughter And everyone who hears about this Will laugh with me.

You see, the promise of blessing Isn't just for Sarah. It's for others too. It's a joy that overflows And is to be shared and experienced By other people.

Do you see it there in the middle of verse 6? And everyone who hears about this Will laugh with me. So how do we get to share In Sarah's delight?

[8 : 16] How do we experience This uncontainable joy That's bursting out of Sarah? Well, it's all by faith.

Come with me please To Luke's Gospel Chapter 1 Luke's Gospel Chapter 1 Because here we get to see How and why We can celebrate And share in Sarah's delight.

You see, the birth of Isaac Would ultimately lead To the birth of God's son Jesus Christ The one who comes to Renew the broken world And restore our broken lives.

And with the coming of Jesus The Saviour There was lots of Joyful laughter. Mary, who was pregnant With Jesus, God's son Goes to visit her cousin Elizabeth, who is also pregnant.

Now look at how Elizabeth responds When Mary comes to her. We pick it up in verse 44. So this is Elizabeth Who's pregnant Speaking to Mary Who's come to see her.

[9 : 36] Verse 44 As soon as the sound Of your greeting Reached my ears The baby in my womb Leaped for joy.

Blessed is she Who has believed That the Lord Would fulfil His promise To her. And Mary said My soul glorifies The Lord And my spirit Rejoices in God My Saviour.

You see Mary and Elizabeth Rejoiced They've come to see That the promised Saviour Has come. And even an unborn baby Is leaping and jumping For joy That the Saviour Of the world Who will renew And restore all things Has come.

What a day Of celebration. But it wasn't just For Mary And Elizabeth. It was a joy For the whole world.

Look at Luke's Gospel Chapter 2. We remember That the angel Came to the shepherd And look what he says In verse 10.

[10 : 49] But the angel Said to them Do not be afraid I bring you Good news That will cause Great Joy For All the people Today In the town of David A Saviour Has been born to you He is the Messiah The Lord Lord You see This is a blessing For all people As they come to faith And turn to trust In Jesus Christ Now just as Sarah Look forward In faith To the promised son Jesus Christ So we Now look back To Jesus Who has come The Saviour Of the world And that changes Everything For us The apostle Peter Understood this He writes Follow on screen Though You have not Seen him It's speaking of Jesus

Though we have not Seen him We love him And even though You do not see him Now You believe in him And we are filled With an inexpressible And glorious joy For you are receiving The end result Of your faith The salvation Of your souls That's Why We sing That's why Ralph led us With joyful praise With all of creation Singing Of God's Great salvation Plan You see We cannot help But express Our delight And happiness In all that God has given To us in Christ That everything Has been changed And our eternal Destiny is secure And we have hope Today And life To come You see Faith In the promise Of God Leads to Uncontainable

Joy Well second Unbelief Unbelief In God's Promise Leads to Unimaginable Misery Let's go back To Genesis Chapter 21 Unbelief In God's Promise Leads to Unimaginable Misery The arrival Of baby Isaac Caused Quite an Upheaval Didn't it Not everyone Was celebrating And sharing In the joy Some Mocked Look at Verse 8 The child The child The child Grew And was Weaned And on The day Isaac Was weaned Abraham Held a Great feast There was There was a Party A celebration

But Sarah Saw that the Son whom Hagar the Egyptian Had born to Abraham Was mocking We of course Know this Son to be Ishmael And he isn't Very excited Is he About the Arrival of Isaac Ishmael Is laughing For sure But he's Not laughing With Sarah In joy He's laughing At Isaac He's Ridiculing Him He's Despising Him He's Verse 9 Mocking Him While others Are rejoicing At God's Promised Blessing Ishmael Is mocking The promised Blessing You see To mock And laugh At Isaac Is actually To mock And laugh At God And his Plan of Redemption Ishmael At this Stage is About 16 Years of Age And should Know better

And he Sees Isaac As a Threat Blessing Well I'm Going to Find my Own Blessing I don't Need promises From God Or anybody Else I'll find My own Way through Life Thank you Very much Rather Rather than Faith In God He was Opting For faith In himself And to Reject The promises Of God To mock God To laugh At God Means It has Serious Consequences For mocking God Will mean That you are Cut off From God Look at Verse 9 But Sarah Saw that The son Whom Hagar The Egyptian Had born To Abraham Was mocking And she Said to Abraham Get rid Of that Slave woman And her Son For that

[15 : 51] Woman's Son Will never Share In the Inheritance With my Son Isaac He's not Going to Share in That blessing Now that Might sound Really harsh To us But Sarah Is only Acting As Ishmael Had already Decided By mocking Isaac Ishmael Was placing Himself Outside of God's Promised Blessing We know This because God affirmed Sarah's Request Look at Verse 11 The matter Distressed Abraham Greatly Because it Concerned His son But God Said to Abraham Do not Be so Distressed About the Boy and Your slave Woman Listen To whatever Sarah Tells you Because it Is through Isaac that The offspring Will be Reckoned The blessings Are going to Come through Isaac's line But sadly Ishmael Didn't want Anything to

Do with It And the Consequences Of unbelief Meant Being cut Off From the Blessings Of God Verse 14 So early The next Morning Abraham Took some Food And a Skin A container Of water And gave Them to Hagar He sent Them on Her shoulders And then Sent her Off with The boy She went On her Way and Wandered In the Desert In the Desert of I think It's one Of the Most Saddest Verses You see Turning Your back On the Promises Of God Is to Be cut Off From the Blessings Of God And rather Than bring Uncontainable Joy It leads To Unimaginable Misery Look at

The effects Of turning Away from God's Promise They were Immediate And harsh From a Life of Blessing They now Enter into A life Of curse From a Home where There was Plenty Ishmael Ends up In a Desert That's Empty Verse 15 When the Water in The skin Was gone She put The boy Under one Of the Bushes Then she Went off And sat Down About a Bow shot Away For she Thought I cannot Watch the Boy I can't Look at See my Child Die And she Sat there And she Began to Sob Can you See The misery Of what Happens when We turn Our backs On God Instead of Life There is Death Instead of Blessing There is Curse Instead of Uncontainable Joy Unimaginable Misery You see

The promises Of God Are not A small Thing They are A serious Thing And it Demands A response From each One of Us Do we Like Sarah Welcome And believe The promise Or like Ishmael Reject The promise It's a Question We are All confronted With With the Arrival Of another Baby The Fulfillment Of all God's Promises Jesus Christ The Son Of God He Confronts Us What Are we Going To do With him To listen To him To trust Him Will be Life To ignore Him And to reject Him Will be Death And as we Respond in Faith to God's promises We are welcomed Into his Family We receive The gift Of life The forgiveness Of sins Fullness And peace We get to Enjoy all

His blessings Now and for All eternity But yet To laugh And mock And turn Our back On Jesus Is to be Cut off Yes we may Find pleasure And happiness For a time But it's Never going To last It leaves Us empty Unfulfilled Never satisfied We'll face An eternity Separated From God Without Hope And without Joy Even as Believers We can be Tempted to Turn away From Jesus Can't we Like Ishmael We can put Our trust In self And go It alone Pursuing Life Pursuing Happiness And joy In things And people And created Things Instead of The creator God Know the

[20 : 53] Message Is turned Back Trust Jesus He is the Source of All life Infinite Peace And eternal Rest His word Will satisfy You His presence Will fulfill You Faith In God's Promise Leads to Uncontainable Joy But unbelief Will lead to Unimaginable Misery God's desire Is that we Would all Share In his Joy So what Hope is There Well Third Hope in God's Promise Leads to Unbelievable Mercy Hope in The promise Leads to Unbelievable Mercy Remember We left Ishmael Outside of The promise Cut off From the Blessing Of God In distress Her mother

His mother Laid her Dying son Under a Bush Let's pick It up In verse 16 Then she Went off And sat Down about A bow Shot away For she Thought I cannot Watch the Boy die I cannot Bear it And as She sat There she Began to Sob Their lives Are hopeless And helpless No chance In the Searing heat No water To revive But as Death Begins To close In We see The Unbelievable Mercy Of God Look at How God Pursues The wanderer There's three Things as we Close to Consider First God Hears Our cry Look at Verse 17 God God heard The boy Crying And the

Angel of God Called to Hagar From heaven And said To her What's The matter Hagar Do not Be afraid God has Heard the Boy crying As he Lies There Remember This is Ishmael Who had Mocked God Who had Turned away From the Gift of Blessing But yet God still Hears his Cry It's as if God is Saying Ishmael You may be Finished with Me But I'm Not finished With you Ishmael You may have Put yourself Outside of God But God Is never Outside of Ishmael Now we May know People who Placed Themselves Outside of God Who want Nothing to Do with Him Maybe it's One of Your Children Maybe a Spouse Maybe a Friend But no One is Ever

Outside The reach Of God It seems That there Is an Offer Of Life You see God Hears our Cry And God Opens Our Eyes Of course Hearing the Cry is no Good unless Something is Done to Relieve that Cry So verse 19 God Hears Now verse 19 God Opened Hagar's Eyes And she Saw a Well of Water So she Went and Filled the Skin with Water And gave The boy A drink It seems Hagar was In so Much distress That she Doesn't see The well It's concealed From her So God Intervenes And opens Her eyes To see That there Is water And the boy Can drink And as he Drinks He lives

And isn't That what God Must do For those Who do Not Believe He must Open our Eyes So that We see In him Life In all Its fullness You remember You remember What John Records for Us in John's Gospel There's Another Woman At another Well And she's Distressed And Jesus Comes to her And says Whoever Drinks The water I give Them Will Never Thirst Indeed The water I give Them Will become In them A spring Of water Welling up To eternal Life I have Come Says Jesus To give Life In all Its fullness Can you See where Life is So God Hears

[25 : 56] Us God Opens Our eyes And third God is With us Look at Verse 20 God Was With The boy As he Grew up He lived In the Desert And became An archer And while he Was living In the Desert Of Paran His mother Got a Wife For him From Egypt Now going To Egypt Is never A good Move In fact Throughout Genesis Anytime we Read of Somebody Going to Egypt It's always A move Away from God And that's Where Ishmael Is turned But yet The extraordinary Thing is God didn't Abandon Him Look at Verse 20 God was With The boy As he Grew up It seems That God Doesn't give Up so Easily Now I'm Not trying To say

All ended Well for Ishmael It doesn't If we Follow the Story But what I want To see Here is The Unbelievable Mercy Of God Who doesn't Give up On wanderers Like Ishmael And if Anybody Rejects God It's Never Going to Be Because God Wasn't Bothered God No God Is God is Kind God's Mercy Is Long Suffering His Countless Interventions In the lives Of those who do Not believe And those who do Believe Every single Day His Daily grace And provision His Steadfast Care He loves His Creation So what does That mean For us Well I think It encourages Me not to Be hopeless When it

Comes to People who Express Unbelief Because God is Merciful And kind The promises Of God Are held Out to Them too That means I can cry Out in Prayer For my Friends I know That when I cry On their Behalf God Who made The world Hears He hears What I have To say And I Can ask God to Open the Eyes of Those who Are blind To Jesus So that They may Know life And have Life in All its Fullness Because I Can't open The eyes Of anyone But God Can And I Can trust That God Is with Those who Turn away And make Sinful Choices And go Further away And I Know that The creator God Is always Within striking

Distance He is with Them all God is Unbelievably Merciful You see It doesn't Matter Who we Are Where we Come from Or what We've done There is Hope In the Promises Of God So there We have It The arrival Of God's Promised Son Teaches Us that Faith in The promises Of God Leads to Uncontainable Joy Unbelief in The promises Of God Leads to Unimaginable Misery But yet There's Hope in The promises Of God Because it Leads to Unbelievable Mercy Let's

Pray In the Quietness Maybe Maybe Maybe you Just want To pray For someone Right now Maybe It is One of Your Children Your Spouse A Friend Maybe You need To pray Yourself Because you Know you Are not Walking In Faith You Who Have Not Trusted In Jesus Pray Because God Hears Pray Because God Opens Eyes Pray

[30 : 59] Because God Is with us Thank you Lord for Hearing our Hearts Cry Thank you for Opening our Eyes to Jesus Thank you That you Are with Us And you Have filled Us With joy In Christ Thank you Amen What we Want to Sing Sarah Laughed Sarah Laughed

With joy At delight In the Promises Of God And we Can laugh With her As we Sing Songs Of joy All my Days of Gladness I only Oh Start Again All my Days I Will sing This song Of gladness Give my Praise to The fountain Of delight For in My helplessness You heard My cry And waves Of mercy Poured down On my Life How it Reflects What we Have just Looked at Together Let's stand Together as We sing To Help Always Chances What caso Is dabei In Hum Coming Food Something Ever More Drug Charge Am Any

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