"The Son of Promise"

(God's Favor towards Isaac)
Genesis 21:1-21
8/23/98

Introduction: "It's a Boy!"

**** God's blessing often results in the two extremes of Rejoicing & Ridicule.***
(Those in God's favor Rejoice! Whereas those outside of His favor Ridicule)

The birth of Isaac became...

I. An Occasion for <u>REJOICING</u> & <u>DEVOTION</u> (v.1-8)

Sarah would rejoice because God had blessed her in fulfilling His promise.

A. God always Keeps His Word (v.1)

B. God is never in a Hurry (v.2)

C. God's faithfulness to His Word is an occasion for <u>obedience</u> (v.3-4)

D. God's faithfulness to His Word is an occasion for <u>celebration</u> (v.5-8)

The birth of Isaac became...

II. An Occasion for <u>RIDICULE</u> & <u>DIVISION</u> (v.9-21)

Ishmael would become bitter because of God's blessing on Sarah & Isaac.

A. Ishmael <u>derides</u> (v.9)

B. Sin <u>divides</u> (v.10-14)

C. God <u>provides</u> (v.15-21)

Conclusion: Isaac vs. Ishmael (what can we learn?) (see: Galatians 4:22-31)

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Introduction: "It's a Boy!"

Many a proud parent has put signs out on the front lawn of their home expressing their joy:
"It's a Boy!"

What joy the birth of a child brings to a home.

**** God's blessing often results in the two extremes of Rejoicing & Ridicule.***
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The birth of Isaac became...

I. An Occasion for <u>REJOICING</u> & <u>DEVOTION</u> (v.1-8)

Sarah would rejoice because God had blessed her in fulfilling His promise.

A. God always Keeps His Word (v.1)

"The LORD <u>visited</u> Sarah" – The word "visited" (*paqad*) "here describes a divine intervention in someone's life that shapes or alters destiny" (Ross, p. 378).

"As he had said. . . as He had spoken" – Since God is consistent and faithful to His Word, He did (as He always does) exactly what He said He would do.

Exactly one year prior, the Lord had personally visited Abraham's tent and said that the same time next year Sarah, who was then 89 years old, would have a son of her own (Gen. 18:10).

v. 2 - "At the set time" – God not only does what He promises, but He does <u>exactly</u> what He promises. To the very day, Sarah was cradling a baby boy of her own, precisely one year after the Lord had said she would (Gen. 18:10).

Whatever God says, God does. He has never made a prophecy that He did not fulfill; never a promise that He did not perform; never did He utter a word that proved to be untrue. We can trust His Word, believe His promises; never doubt the Word of God!

He is, therefore, worthy of my trust!

Caution: Before you claim a promise as your own, ask yourself:

1) Is the promise universal in scope?
(Rom. 10:13 – "Whosoever"; Lk. 9:23-24 – "Anyone . . . whoever")

2) Is the promise personal in nature?
(Acts 18:9-10 – to Paul – "No man will harm you")
--All Scripture is for us, but not necessarily to us.
--Not all that happened in the Bible is normative.

3) Is the promise conditional
(Ja. 4:10; I Jn. 1:9)

(Swindoll, p. 104)

B. God is never in a Hurry (v.2)

These verses teach us two important truths about God and His Word:

1) God never forgets or retracts His Word (Swindoll, Abraham, The Friend of God IFL, p. 103)

2) God is in no hurry
(It's been 25 years since the promise of Gen. 12:1-4)
(He doesn't operate on our timetables; learn to wait on God)

C. God's faithfulness to His Word is an occasion for obedience (v.3-4)

v. 3
Abraham obeys the God who kept His promises. In obedience to God's command (17:19), Abraham names his son Isaac (*Yitzak*), which means "he laughs." While Sarah had laughed secretly at the promise God made that she would have a son at the age of 90 (18:12), it was God who now has the last laugh. He laughs, "Ah Ha! You thought it couldn't be done!"

v. 4
As a mark of distinction, circumcision would be the external reminder of the covenant God made with Abraham (Gen. 17:11). All male descendents of Abraham would have this distinguishing feature about their reproductive organ which would remind them of the miracle conception of Isaac and how all of the descendents of Abraham were to be a set apart (sanctified) people – unlike the pagan nations.

D. God's faithfulness to His Word is an occasion for <u>celebration</u> (v.5-8)

v. 6
Sarah no longer laughs in doubt, but laughs with amazement and joy!

God's fulfillment of His promises brings joy to the heart!

v. 7
"Sarah's (90year old) body was not only rejuvenated to bear a child but also to nurse him" (Ryrie)

God specializes in doing that which nobody would expect; He baffles men's minds by doing what seems impossible. However, nothing is impossible for Him!

v. 8
A child would normally be weaned off of breast feeding at the age of 2 or 3.

Abraham, now with a healthy, no doubt plump, well-fed baby boy, throws a party to celebrate God's goodness to his son.

The birth of Isaac became...

II. An Occasion for <u>RIDICULE</u> & <u>DIVISION</u> (v.9-21)

Ishmael would become bitter because of God's blessing on Sarah & Isaac.

A. Ishmael <u>derides</u> (v.9)

How do we respond when we see someone else promoted, blessed in some way, or happy?

The Bible says to: "Rejoice with them that rejoice!"

It is so common for sinful siblings to envy their brother or sister's blessing rather than to rejoice in God's blessing.

Evidently, during their joyful time of celebration, someone (namely, Ishmael) was not happy at all. This boy (now a teenager) was mocking (making fun of or laughing at) Isaac and perhaps even old Sarah.

The word is used negatively of joking (19:14) or insult (39:14, 17). The Septuagint translated this verb with "give way to hilarity" (*paizonta*), apparently an attempt to intensify the meaning of the *piel* form of this word (Ross, p. 380).

In Ishmael's heart was perhaps jealousy and bitterness over:

1. The celebration (for Isaac) ("Why a party for Isaac and not for me?" cp. the Prodigal Son's brother – Lk. 15:28-30).

2. The birthright (going to Isaac) ("In Isaac Ishmael saw all his hopes for an inheritance shattered" – Ryrie) The favored heir would be Isaac not Ishmael.

Even to this day the descendents of Ishmael are bitterly jealous, envious, and antagonistic of the descendents of Isaac.

B. Sin divides (v.10-14)

v. 10
In Sarah's mind, it was time for the servant Hagar and her son to go. To Sarah it was evident that harmony in the home would be impossible, since Isaac would be the sole heir of the Abrahamic estate.

Since Ishmael (the oldest son of Abraham) posed as a threat to the promised inheritance, expulsion was inevitable.

Ishmael at this time was not a young child but a teenager. Since Abraham was 86 when Ishmael was born (Gen. 16:16), and he was 100 when Isaac was born, and allowing two years (minimum) to pass before Isaac was weaned (Gen. 21:8), Ishmael would now be at least 16 years old.

v. 11
Although Ishmael was not Abraham's wife's son, he was still Abraham's son, so it saddened Abraham to contemplate his departure.

"In Isaac shall thy seed be called" – The favored nation of the Abrahamic covenant would not be Ishmael but Isaac.

It is interesting to note that in this entire chapter Ishmael's name is not mentioned once, although he is referred to often. To emphasize "Isaac" as the heir, his name occurs repetitively, but Ishmael is called "the son of Hagar...his son...thy seed...the child...the lad" etc.

v. 12
"The divine approval of sending away Hagar and Ishmael was a sign not of divine abandonment of Ishmael but of protection for Isaac" (Ross, p. 381).

God would again in the future, sovereignly allow a separation between Jacob and Esau so as to build His chosen nation through Jacob.

v. 13
God reassures Abraham that since Ishmael was a product of his loins, and since God had promised to bless Abraham with many nations, nothing tragic would happen to Ishmael, and that he would be the patriarch of an entire nation. A large segment of the Arab nation would flow from Ishmael!

v. 14
Abraham always obeyed God immediately.

C. God <u>provides</u> (v.15-21)

v. 16
With Ishmael sitting under a shade tree some 50+ yards away, Hagar sat with her back toward him, not desiring to see him pine away in death.

v. 18
Although Ishmael would not be Abraham's heir, and although he was not the favored son, it did not mean that god didn't care for him or that God wouldn't bless him.

God says, "Hagar, go give your son a hug and don't lose hope for I have a future in mind for your son. He will survive to father children and a huge nation will proceed from him."

v. 19
"God opened her eyes" – Evidently the well was there all the time, but she simply did not see it.

Until God opens a lost man's eyes, he doesn't see God's salvation although it was provided two millennia ago and has been available all along.

"God desires to be the God of the outcast, the rejected, the abused, the dying. The plight of Hagar should draw sympathy from the reader, for she was an unfortunate woman caught in the web of Abraham and Sarah and their faltering efforts to achieve their destiny, and she was the abused and rejected woman, who, with the birth of Isaac, was suddenly very much in the way. The deliverance of Hagar and Ishmael should evoke hope in the reader, for God did not let them die in the wilderness but gave them a new life and a great future (see Trible, "Hagar," p. 20-29)." (Ross, p. 381).

v. 20
god would provide for Hagar and her son without Abraham's resources.

He would equip Ishmael with the skill of living off the land as an archer.

v. 21
Since Hagar was an Egyptian and since Ishmael's wife was an Egyptian, Ishmael's descendents would be primarily Egyptian and would resemble the Egyptians, looking rather different from the Jews. So it is to this day.

Conclusion: Isaac vs. Ishmael (what can we learn?) (see: Galatians 4:22-31)

Although God would build a nation through Ishmael, the theme of v. 1-21 clearly involves God's favor toward Isaac – the pre-eminence of Isaac over Ishmael.

Was God right in choosing one over the other? Absolutely!

God chose to select a lineage through which He would give His Law (His Word) and through which the Messiah would come. God had to pick one branch through which He would fulfill His promise of a seed, namely Christ.

Which of the two would we expect Him to choose?

1) The illegitimate son of Hagar (who was not Abraham's proper wife) or the son of his wife, Sarah?

2) The son produced by the flesh (by Sarah's and Abraham's plotting and scheming) or the son produced by a promise by God?

3) The son produced by the young woman Hagar or the son produced by the old woman Sarah?

4) The son who brought joy and laughter at God's miraculous work, or the son who mocked with bitter jealousy?

5) The son conceived by a natural (explainable) way or the miracle conception (the supernatural, inexplicably conceived son)?

(Note: Only Isaac could in part typify Christ by having a miraculous birth)

Isaac (as Abraham's "only begotten" son – Heb. 11:17) in a sense would serve as a type of Christ in two ways:

1) His miraculous birth (Jesus would be miraculously born of a virgin)

2) His sacrifice on Mt. Moriah (Gen. 22) (Jesus would give His life on Mt. Moriah)

SEE Paul's very interesting application of the Isaac/Ishmael account in Galatians 4:22-31.

Note the contrast being made between the Law and Grace, natural and supernatural, earthly and heavenly, flesh and promise, faith and unbelief.

"In Gal. 4:28-29, Paul makes it clear that Ishmael represents the believer's first birth (the flesh) and Isaac represents the second birth (the "Spirit")" (Wiersbe, p. 99).

PAUL'S ANALOGIES BETWEEN ISAAC & ISHMAEL

"Isaac" (laughter)	"Ishmael" (mockery)
Recipients of the promise: believers	Wanders, in bondage: unbelievers
Spiritual seed: promise fulfilled in Christ, the Seed	Physical seed: awaiting the promise under the Law
Spirit: Christians growing in grace	Flesh: Judaizers living under the Law

CHART BY ROSS