

# (Genesis) Genesis 20-21

by Joe Focht

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*The sermon explores the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah, emphasizing God's judgment, the importance of repentance, and the church's role in addressing sin with love and truth.*

**Duration:** 56:35

**Scripture:** Genesis 19:24-26, Romans 1:26

**Topics:** "Spiritual Growth", "Trust In God"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the story of Hagar and Ishmael in the desert. He highlights how God allowed Hagar to experience a dry and difficult time in the desert to teach her dependence on Him. The preacher emphasizes that being in a desert experience is not necessarily a result of sin, but rather a prescribed part of our spiritual education. He encourages listeners to trust in God's leading and find beauty in the desert, as God can provide refreshment and blessings even in the most challenging times.

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## Transcript

Genesis 19.23 says, The sun was risen upon the earth when Lot entered into Zoar. Then the Lord reigned upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah, brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven. And he overthrew those cities and all the plain and all the inhabitants of the cities, that which grew upon the ground.

But his wife, Lot's wife, looked back. Again, from behind him she lingered. And she became a pillar of salt.

Now, again, this is a divine judgment upon Sodom and Gomorrah, as we move through this passage. And I received questions during the week about Sodom and Gomorrah. The sin of Sodom and Gomorrah is mentioned numerous times in the Bible, I believe 48 times in the Old Testament.

Sodom and Gomorrah are mentioned 19 times in the New Testament. And it becomes synonymous with unbridled sexual sin. And no doubt that is of all kinds.

It was without restraint, so it did not have any limits. And so it becomes synonymous with that kind of sin. Now, on many of our state laws today, we still have restrictions about sodomy on the books of many of our states.

It is still something that we hear of today. Those of you that may be lawyers that have studied law, and much of our law based on English law, and all of that based on scripture to a degree. And Blackstone defines sodomy very clearly, what the law of God is in regards to those things.

Now, clearly, rather than just having an opinion, the scripture I think gives an evidence of what was taking place. If you're interested, I'll read a few verses. Well, let me read Jude verse 7 first.

If you're interested, you can flip there. If not, you can just listen. Jude is mentioning the judgment upon Egypt, the judgment upon the fallen angels, and the judgment upon Sodom and Gomorrah as being examples to those who would live ungodly.

Said the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation once and for all, the idea is, he hath reserved into everlasting chains under darkness under the judgment of the great day, even as Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities about them in like manner, Greek grammar law to the angels, giving themselves over to fornication. Now, to be given over to simply means that. It means to be unbridled.

It means to be controlled by. And it says, as Sodom and Gomorrah was given over to fornication, porneia, we get pornography. It is sexual activity that is outside of the law of God, outside of marriage.

It is sexual perversion. They were given over, it says, the cities to fornication, going after strange flesh as the angels did. Unnatural in the example that's being used here are set forth as an example of suffering the vengeance.

And then it says of eternal fire. So whatever else happened in Sodom and Gomorrah in regards to geological upheaval and oil deposits and the burning and so forth, what started it all off was the falling of eternal fire upon Sodom and Gomorrah. And it clearly says that their sin was an unbridled sexual sin that the entire city was given over to.

Now back in 19, we get a picture of it when they say to Lot in verse 5, they called unto Lot and they said unto him, All of the men of the city, young and old, from every quarter, hear that there's two new men in town, remarkably. And they call unto Lot and they said unto him, Where are the men which came in to thee this night? Bring them out to us that we may know them. And it speaks about having sexual relations with them.

Now, there are those that say this simply means to know them. And that from Ezekiel 16.49 where it says, The real sin of thy sister Sodom was a full belly idle time in the pride of life. They remembered not the poor.

They say there what it's saying is the real sin of Sodom and Gomorrah was inhospitality and pride. And that the men of the city are simply saying, you know, bring them out that we might know them. We'll have tea with them and talk with them.

But that is not at all what is being said. The next verse, Ezekiel 16.50 says that they had committed an abomination. You have to read on.

It is the same phrase that says Adam knew his wife and she conceived. The same phrase that says that Cain knew his wife and she conceived and bear a son. That Seth knew his wife.

That Adam knew his wife again. We have it in Judges. And I'll read.

You don't have to turn there. Where it says, Now they were making their hearts merry. Judges 19.

Behold, the men of the city, certain sons of Belial, beset the house round about and beat at the door and spake to the master of the house, the old man, saying, Bring forth the man that came into thy house that

we may know him. The exact same phrase. And the man, the master of the house, went out unto them and said unto them, Nay, my brethren, nay, I pray you, do not so wickedly, seeing that this man is come into my house, do not this folly.

Here is my daughter, a maiden, and his concubine. Them I will bring out now, and humble ye them. Do with them what seemeth good unto you, but unto this man do not such a vile thing.

So in both cases, both in Sodom and here in Judges, we know that it's a sexual thing. They're saying, Bring them out that we may have a homosexual relationship with them. Because in both places, both Lot and this other man says, Here is a daughter.

Here is a concubine. Do this in lieu of, if you want this sexual thing, humble them. Do to them whatever you want to do.

And evidently Sodom and Gomorrah were completely given over to unbridled sexual passion in so much that the men of the city wanted to have these two men, which were angels that came and to have homosexual relationships with them. God calls it wickedness in 2 Peter where He says He knows how to reserve the righteous and to set aside the wicked for judgment in context of Sodom and Gomorrah. They knew how to deliver just Lot, but set aside the wicked.

Leviticus 18 says this, Thou shalt not lie with mankind as with womankind. It is an abomination. Now by the way, there are those who will say that is speaking about a law for the priesthood and it is a warning that they shouldn't be given over to the idolatry that the nations around them were given over to and that it does not apply to two men who have a monogamous relationship.

No, it's very simply. It says that you shall not lie with a man as you lie with a woman. It is an abomination.

Again, it says this in Leviticus 20. It says, If a man also lie with mankind as he lieth with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination. They shall surely be put to death.

Their blood shall be upon them. Again, Deuteronomy 23. You can turn there on your own.

Romans 1, 26. So we just hit a few in the New Testament to give you the idea here of the Word of God. And some tried to wrangle it around.

It speaks of those who would not own God as Creator. They would not acknowledge the truth of God. For this cause, God gave them up to vile affections.

For even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature. And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another, men with men, working that which is unseemly, unnatural, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their own error, which was meat. They're given to a reprobate mind, it says.

It is wicked. It is evil. You have the word in 1 Corinthians 6, 9, effeminate.

You have 1 Timothy 1, 10, abusers of mankind, arsino coitus in both places, which simply means a man who goes to bed with a man. So the Bible forbids that. Now, I think the church's problem is this.

I think that we have to realize that God loves the homosexual but hates homosexuality. That God loves the homosexual the same as he loves an adulterer or a fornicator or a drug addict, which I was. I mean, God

is gracious and there is forgiveness and there is new life.

And I think, but we have to understand that God does draw the lines and that sin is sin and it is not acceptable that there can be those that can be set free as I was set free from drugs. Many of you are set free from drugs, from addictions, from alcohol, from any number of things that God has something better for us as his sons and daughters. And that clearly God defines the lines in regards to what we call homosexuality that it is wrong.

Now, I think the church has to learn how to deal with the person who is coming out of that lifestyle who needs encouragement. And I think that somehow we have to draw the line between the sinner and the sin that God hates and the sinner that God loves. And it's a difficult issue.

But I think it is not love to allow someone to remain in their sin and not to be clear. The Family Research Council in Washington, D.C., we get a fax from them every day citing dozens of experts. They did a study of over 5,200 obituaries in over a five-year period in 16 homosexual newspapers to study the lifestyle of homosexuals.

The average age of men dying of AIDS in the United States, across the board, is 39 years old. The average age of homosexuals dying of any disease, of any cause, is 41. Only one percent lived in the obituaries.

Only one percent lived to be 65 or older. One percent. Only three percent live to over 55.

Homosexual men are three times as likely to have alcohol or drug abuse problems, 14 times more likely to have syphilis, 23 times more likely to contract a venereal disease, 1,000 times more likely to contract AIDS. Lesbians are 19 times more likely than heterosexual women to have syphilis and twice as likely to have genital warts. They took San Francisco as a study because it's the most openly gay city in America.

In San Francisco, the rate of infectious hepatitis A is twice the national average, twice as high. The rate of infectious hepatitis B is three times the national average. And the rate of venereal disease is 22 times the national average.

Among homosexuals, the ratio of men murdered is 50 times the national average. 50 times. That of the general population.

Suicide, 60 times higher than the national average amongst homosexuals. 60 times. Auto accidents.

I don't know how they figure that. 45 times. But my point is this, you know, to love the sinner is to offer him a lifestyle that is much better than that.

It is fuller. It sets us free. I mean, we could have looked at statistics on drug addicts.

And we would have been appalled at what we'd have seen there. Or just statistics across the board of immoral people that are involved in heterosexual sex outside of marriage. And we would have been appalled at what are we seeing there.

So as we look at the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah, know this, the Bible is clear that it was unbridled sexual behavior. And in particular, the case that we looked at was that of homosexual sin. And the Bible is clear that that is unacceptable to God as an abomination.

But the Bible is also clear that there is forgiveness for those who will turn to the Lord. Now I'm mentioning that because the Metropolitan Church and the homosexual community, it's a confusing issue sometimes because you see they have the title of homosexual evangelicals. And there are some tracts that they've put out that have kind of run an end run around some of these verses.

But then you read past that and some of those tracts are very well done. They talk about the need to accept Christ as Savior, to repent of one's sins. And they're very clear on the business of being saved.

So there's almost a mud, you know, the lines become muddied and unclear. But the Bible is not unclear, know that. And the same as it is on any other sin, it is very clear.

And I think the nation has come to the point where for that to become a political force, in other words, we don't find adulterers out trying to sway legislation. Or we don't find, you know, crack addicts out trying to sway legislation and have the using of crack pushed in the public school system as an acceptable behavior. And we don't have, you know, junky pride day or anything.

You know, it just, it has kind of gotten itself into a position. And I don't mean to be funny, but we have to realize it's become a political animal. It has come into a position that tells us as a people and as a nation that we are disintegrating, that we are falling apart because of what we now accept and say is normal.

And Isaiah warned the time would come when that which is right would be called wrong and that which is wrong would be called right. And Jesus warned that it would be as in the days of Noah. And again, continual immorality, the imaginations of hearts, man's mind continually evil.

And it would be like in the days of Lot and certainly militant homosexuality is a sign of the time. And here in Lot, they wanted to break down the door. They were angry because Lot said do not so wickedly and their lifestyle was judged.

So I think, you know, for the church in America here, I think it's a difficult issue. And I don't think that the church, myself, I don't think the church has done the job that it could do to reach out to that community. And certainly there are a lot of broken lives for who knows, you know, all the baggage and all the reasons.

But I think that the demonstration of love that we always need to show to a lost world, to any sinner in any condition is these are the lines that God has drawn. And if you persist in sin, you will go to hell. If you turn to Christ for forgiveness, your life can be changed and improved forever.

And that is the message. God rained down fire, eternal fire on Sodom and on Gomorrah. Lot's wife looked back, was turned to a pillar of salt.

Abraham got up early in the morning, it says, to the place where he stood before the Lord, and he looked toward Sodom and Gomorrah, toward all the land of the plain, and behold and lo! Now you know something heavy's going on because it says, behold and lo! Behold and lo! The smoke of the country went up as the smoke of a furnace. Now this had been a well-wooded plain. Remember, that's why Lot chose it.

Now it's going up as the smoke of a furnace. And it came to pass when God destroyed the cities of the plain that God remembered Abraham and he sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow when he overthrew the cities in which Lot dwelt. Now by the way, if God is remembering Abraham and his plea for Lot, just think where we sit this evening because it says, Jesus Christ ever liveth and maketh intercession for the saints.

You know, if Abraham's intercession was effective and touched the heart of God in regards to Lot, just think what's happening for us this evening, that our very name is on the lips of the Son of God at the right hand of the throne of God Almighty. Lot went up out of Zoar and dwelt in the mountain and his two daughters with him because he feared to dwell in Zoar. So he dwelt in a cave, he and his two daughters.

Now remember, Lot had said, please don't send me to the mountains. I'll die there. Send me to Zoar.

It's a little city, no problem. The angel finally said, okay, look, just go to Zoar. I can't do anything to you.

Get out of here. Well, Lot was headed into Zoar. The morning was up as Lot sees what God does, the Son of Gomorrah, and he sees how close that had come to him.

He sees his wife being encrusted in salt. She had lingered that far behind. He sees the smoke of this area going up like a furnace.

No doubt the whole earth shook. Lot then changed his mind and decided he didn't want to be in Zoar because he knew, is this fire thing going to happen on a regular basis now? You know, Lot decided it's better to be in the mountains. Now, what amazes me is he didn't go to live with Abraham.

Why didn't he just go find Abraham? He said, hey man, I made a bad decision. You know, I've been a knucklehead. Just, you know, Abraham was there for him.

So he ends up living in a cave. This is a guy who chose the best for himself. Now living in a cave.

And the firstborn said to his daughters, unto the younger, verse 31, our father is old. There is not a man in the earth to come in unto us after the manner of all the earth. Come, let us make our father drink wine, and we will lie with him that we may preserve seed of our father.

Now, you know, as I look at this, I think, first of all, you know, the daughters are of the moral standard of Sodom. That's where they were raised. And they're saying, look, our dad's going to die.

There's no man. Everybody we know is gone. You know, let's seduce our father.

We'll get him drunk. And we'll bear children from our father. The remarkable thing is, I think, where does a guy living in a cave get wine? You know, of all the things you're going to lug out of Sodom and take with you, you know, did they take, you know, a gallon of wine or something? You know, where did they get this wine living in a cave? This is a remarkable thing here.

They made their father drink wine that night, verse 33. And the firstborn went in and lay with her father. He perceived it not when she lay down nor when she arose.

Now he's really pickled. You know, at least for Lot's credit, they had to get him drunk. He would not have consented to this if he was sober.

And it came to pass, on the next day, the firstborn said to the younger, Behold, I laid last night with my father. Let us make him drink wine this night also, and go thou in and lie with him, that we may preserve seed of our father. And they made their father drink wine that night also.

And the younger arose and lay with him, and he perceived not when she lay down nor when she arose. Thus were both the daughters of Lot with child by their father. Now this is remarkable because God had

said to Abraham in chapter 18, verse 19, You know, I'm going to let Abraham know what I'm going to do with Sodom and Gomorrah because I'm sure that he will instruct his children after them, and he will teach them my ordinances.

He'll teach them to do what's right and to walk in my ways. How different Lot's family is, how he had sacrificed his family for the material. He had made his choices with a natural eye instead of making his choices on his knees.

It cost him his wife. It had cost him everything. Now he's living in a cave.

And the last time we have his name mentioned in this chronology, in the record, we hear his name many times, but in the record of his life here, the last time we have his name mentioned is this. So both the daughters of Lot were with child by their father. How sad as he signs off, as it were.

The firstborn bear a son, verse 37, and called his name Moab. The same as the father of the Moabites unto this day. The younger, she also bear a son, called his name Ben-Ammi.

The same as the father of the children of Ammon. Ammon is the capital of Jordan today. Ammon, Ammon, unto this day.

Moab and Ammon. And Abraham journeyed from there towards the south country. Now, it's interesting to watch this.

So far, whenever we got to wine, we've got a problem. Whether it's Noah or whether it's Lot, wine has not been a good thing so far in the Bible. I don't think it's still a good thing when you look at the newspaper.

Abraham, every time he goes south, he ends up in trouble, and I can't believe he's doing it again. You know, this is interesting. Abraham heads towards the south country.

He dwelt in Kadish and Shur and sojourned in Gerar. And Abraham said of Sarah, his wife, she is my sister. Now, doesn't this take us back? You know, that was 25 years earlier.

He told the same story as he went down to Egypt. And you'd think he would have learned. You know, I appreciate the honesty of Scripture.

As we read the New Testament and Hebrews 11 and all the wonderful things Abraham did by faith, God mentions none of these things because he doesn't see them in Christ. He sees a different righteousness. But in the natural, I see Abraham struggling like so many of us.

You know, he had gone south before and had to tell Pharaoh that Sarah was his sister. Now he heads south again and he says of Sarah, she's my sister. And Abimelech, the king of Gerar, sent and took Sarah.

Now, this is remarkable for a number of reasons. First of all, Abimelech is not the man's name. It is his position.

The king in Egypt was called Pharaoh. The king in this area of Philistine country, and we'll get to that, was named Abimelech. That was his title, not his name.

His name may have been Frank or Harry. I don't know. But his title was Abimelech.

He sends and takes Sarah, who's 90 years old, into his harem. That's because God had started to rejuvenate her. Remember, back in chapter 18, God said in a year, you're going to have a child.

She laughed. She said, it ceased to be with me after the manner of women. I'm through menopause.

I don't even have a menstrual cycle anymore. I don't ovulate anymore. I have none of that stuff going.

Look at me. I'm a prune. I'm all dried up.

There's nothing left. And Abraham, that's as funny. Just as funny, she says.

Now, remarkably, God is rejuvenating. We're going to find her in the next chapter, breastfeeding Isaac. God restores.

Abraham will go on and remarry at 160 and have six more kids. And remarkably, her beauty must be returning. At 90 years old, Abimelech takes her into his harem.

I love this. Look at verse 3. God came to Abimelech in a dream by night and said, consider this. You're a dead man.

That's our dad. You know, I like that. Somebody messes with your kids.

Don't you feel like that? You're a dead man. You know, art but is in italics there. They, you know, behold you, you're a dead man.

Because the woman which thou hast taken, she is a man's wife. Now, if you're in adultery this evening, sitting here thinking that you're not seen, note that the eye of God was on this situation. And he says, you are a dead man because you have taken someone else's wife.

God honors marriage and the vows and the covenant and does not play fast and loose with adultery. It was a capital crime in the Old Testament. And we can thank God that it's not now.

Our ranks would probably have been thinned. Many of us would not have made it to the day that we were saved. And if you're in adultery this evening and you're squirming in your seat, I don't know who you are.

God does. And if the shoe fits, wear it. You should be squirming because Jesus Christ could come at any moment.

And when He does, we will all give an account and we'll stand before the living God, no doubt to be judged and to given rewards. But our works will be tried as a fire. And it is not a light thing.

You're a dead man because the woman you've taken is another man's wife. But Abimelech had not come near her. And he says to the Lord, Are you going to slay this righteous nation? I don't know if he heard about Abraham's discussion with God.

Said he not unto me? He's arguing with God. Now, didn't he tell me that was his sister? You heard it. She even herself said, He's my brother.

And now Abimelech says this, In the integrity of my heart, I'm sure God's impressed. In the integrity of my heart, in the innocency of my hands, have I done this? And I love God's answer. God says unto him in a dream, Yeah, I know.

Look what he said. He says, Yeah, I know that you did it in the integrity of your heart. The reason is, is because I withheld you from sinning against me.

Therefore, I suffered you not to touch her. Don't tell me you did it in the integrity of your heart. I was the one who kept you from doing it, he says to him.

Because it tells us in Proverbs that the king's heart is in the Lord's hand and he turns it whichever way he will. And God says, I'm the one that turned you, Abimelech, away from this. It's not because of your integrity.

Cut me a break. Now, therefore, restore the man his wife, for he is a prophet. That's the first time the word prophet is used in the Bible of Abraham.

And he shall pray for you, and you shall live. If you restore her not, know thou that thou shalt surely die, thou and all that are thine. Now, I don't know if Abimelech saw the smoke coming up from the sky, from Sodom and Gomorrah, like a furnace, but he knows well, you do not mess with this particular god.

And no doubt he was an idolater and thought there were many gods, but he knew of a certainty that Abraham's god was one that you did not mess around with. Therefore, Abimelech rose early in the morning. I guess he did.

He called all of his servants, he told all these things in their ears, and the men were sore afraid. You know, I'm thinking, doesn't anybody ask, you know, Abraham's 100 years old and Sarah's 90. You're brother and sister, why are you living together your whole life? You guys ever get married? Where's your mom and dad? This story's getting a little old, brothers and sisters.

Abimelech called Abraham and says unto him, what have you done unto us? What in the world did you do? You know that you're in trouble when you are a believer and you're getting rebuked by a non-believer for your lack of Christian honesty. You know, the worst kind of liars are the deceivers, you know, the ones who claim to be something that they're not. And Abraham, by the way, it's interesting, you know, he passes this bent on to Isaac because Isaac will also tell the king of the south that Rebekah is his sister and not his wife.

He learns from the dad. What have you done? And what have I said? What did I do? Have I offended you? That you brought on me and my kingdom this great sin? And thou hast done deeds unto me that ought not to be done. This shouldn't be done to anybody.

Now, this is Abimelech reproving Abraham. And Abimelech said unto Abraham, what sawst thou? In our jargon, what in the world were you thinking that thou hast done this thing? And Abraham said, well, I thought surely the fear of God is not in this place and they will slay me for my wife's sake. This is the man of faith.

God's made him all kinds of promises. They're going to kill me. And yet indeed, she is my sister.

Abraham explains his loophole now. She, Sarah, is the daughter of my father, but not the daughter of my mother. And she became my wife.

Before the Levitical laws, Abraham's saying, well, we have the same father and different mom. So it's kind of a half-truth. She's my half-sister.

But I want you to know something. A half-truth is a full-blown lie. Don't let anybody kid you.

A half-truth is a full-blown lie because the reason you tell a half-truth is to deceive. So it's a full-blown lie. That's the job it does.

There's no such thing as a half-truth because once you tell it, it's a whole lie. It's no longer a half-truth. It came to pass when God caused me to wander, Abraham says to Abimelech, from my father's house.

I said unto her, to Sarah, now this is the kindness which you're going to show unto me. Every place we go, you say of me, he's my brother. Now, you have to understand.

Abraham was a city boy. He's called from Ur of the Chaldees. He heads out into the desert.

There's bandits. There's robbers. They're encountering all kinds of different cultures and people they never ran into before.

Sarah, evidently, is a knockout. And Abraham realizes, everybody looks at my wife. So he says, I want you to do me a favor.

Everywhere we go, this is what your story is. I'm your brother. Because he knows then they're not going to kill me to get my wife.

Abimelech took sheep and oxen and men's servants and women's servants, and he gave them to Abraham and restored him Sarah, his wife. And Abimelech said, behold, my land is before you. Do well wherever you like.

God must have really freaked this guy out. He said, the whole country is here. Just help yourself.

Take whatever you want. And unto Sarah, he said, behold, notice this. I have given thy brother, instead of thy husband, I've given thy brother a thousand pieces of silver.

Behold, he is to thee a covering of the eyes unto all that are with thee and with all others. Thus, she was reproved. And some feel that he was saying, why weren't you wearing a veil like a married woman? You know, I've given your husband a thousand pieces of silver.

He's supposed to be a covering for you and so forth. He reproves Sarah also. And Abraham prayed to God, notice, and God healed Abimelech and his wife and his maidservants.

And they finally, they bear children. Now, we're not told what was wrong with them or how long Sarah was in his harem, but evidently they had come down with something. And it was the proof that they were on their way to being judged completely by God.

Abraham now prays, and Abimelech and his family and his household are healed. For the Lord had fast closed up all the wombs of the house of Abimelech because of Sarah, Abraham's wife. So however long she was there, there was no conception or birth.

Now, the Lord visited Sarah as he had said. And the Lord did unto Sarah as he had spoken. For Sarah conceived and bare Abraham a son in his old age at the set time of which God had spoken.

So, God does what He says. He does according to what He speaks. And He does it at His set time.

I mean, that's an encouragement to us that God does what He says He's going to do. Now, I love that. As we go through the Scripture and we see all of the prophecies and all of the promises of God, so many of them fulfilled and we see the record of it, that's encouraging because He says that in the twinkling of an eye He's going to catch us up.

And we're going to be with Him forever. Be His sons and daughters. We're going to stand around His throne.

So I like it when I am always reminded that God fulfills everything He says He's going to do. But He does it in His time. That's the part that we don't always appreciate.

His schedule is different than ours. He's not in the same rush that we are. He did it at the set time.

And Abraham called the name of his son that was born. Abraham's 100 and Sarah's 90. Whom Sarah bear unto him Isaac, which means laughter, Itzhak.

And to Abraham it was a reminder that he had laughed in joy as God told him he would have a son. And to Sarah it's a reminder she had laughed with unbelief. To both of them a reminder.

And Abraham circumcised his son Isaac being eight days old as God had commanded him. And Abraham was a hundred years old when his son Isaac was born unto him. And Sarah said, God hath made me to laugh so that all who hear will laugh with me.

Now I'm wondering if Sarah's trying to give people the impression that's why the kid's name is Itzhak. Because God's given her joy. His name is Isaac because she laughed in unbelief.

But she doesn't say that. And she said, who would have said unto Abraham that Sarah should have given children suck so even her milk has come in. I mean, she's astounded how God has rejuvenated her.

For I have born him a son in his old age. And the child grew and was weaned in that culture. Somewhere around three years old probably.

And Abraham made a great feast the same day that Isaac was weaned. I'm sure that Sarah joined in. That's a sentence, three years.

She joined the party when he was weaned. You know, it's just so interesting to watch this the way God does it. I mean, he does it in a way that no one helps.

There is no contribution that anyone can make. He is making a point about a divine promise. He's making a point about a divine covenant.

And because of that, he lets no one touch it as he had parted the animals in pieces. He himself had passed between those pieces ratifying the covenant with himself. Abraham did not pass between the parts.

And so much of the time, we put our hands to something or we try to help God accomplish something. And in our sweat and in our own wisdom, how we complicate things and we involve our Hagar's and our Ishmael's. And we find out in the final analysis, no, God waits until it comes to the point where no one will get the credit or the glory but him.

That no one will finally assume final responsibility to make things work the way they should. But him alone, he will share his glory with no man. So now this son Isaac is born to these two ancient people.

You know, I kind of, I enjoyed the last two. You know, Joanna was born 1978. Kathy and I get married and we decided that we would wait two years to have children.

Well, she was pregnant in five months. And Joanna came quickly. We were young and, you know, you borrow a crib.

I remember when she was first born, Kath said, well, we need changing pads. I said, what do you need changing pads for? We have a bed can't change around the bed, you know. And then we needed, you know, handy wipes.

I said, what do you need handy wipes for? We have washcloths. You know, I didn't understand anything that was happening. And we had to borrow a crib and, you know, those early kids.

And it was kind of nice when Hannah was born. We were older. That was 10 years later.

And by then we had settled a little bit. And we could get the clothes we wanted. And we could get the changing table we wanted.

And, you know, and there's kind of a little bit more of a joy having that daughter or the son of your old age. And I think, you know, it must have been a wonderful thing for Abraham at 100 and Sarah at 90. You know, sometimes older folks are so settled in their spirit.

They've been around. They're no longer freaked out by one thing that doesn't work out. They're not in that rush of youth anymore.

And I think how wonderful for this child. You know how little kids gravitate towards grandparents when they have good grandparents. And they love grandma and grandpa.

Besides grandma and grandpa buy their heart with the toys and then leave. But, you know, they gravitate towards the quietness and the strength of an older person. And I think how wonderful to see Isaac reared under Abraham at 100 and Sarah at 90.

You know, it will be Joseph that will, you know, display tremendous fruit in his life. Being the son of Jacob's old age, after Jacob has wrestled with God and has been broken in his spirit, how different he is from his brothers. And it just must, I look at this and think how incredible it must be.

90-year-old woman nursing a baby. Baby looking up, you know. There's dad, white hair, white beard.

Must be amazing. Sarah saw the son, verse 9. Not that everything went smooth. Sarah saw the son of Hagar, the Egyptian, which she had born unto Abraham, mocking.

Now, this is Ishmael. He's about 12 years old now. No longer the center of attention.

Having the sense, no doubt, that he is not the heir any longer. That this now son of Sarah will be, in fact, the heir. Now, Sarah threw this at different points that seems to be rather harsh in regards to Hagar.

I mean, it was her I brainstormed in the first place. And Abram had listened to her in that situation. And he shouldn't have.

The thing was very grievous in Abraham's sight because of his son, because Abraham loved Ishmael. You know, for years there was no Isaac. And Abraham, when God came to him and promised him that Isaac would be born and said, Lord, may Ishmael live forever.

And God said, Abraham, I'm going to bless Ishmael too because of you. He's going to become a great nation. My blessing will also be on his life.

And Abraham loved Ishmael. Sarah had no time for Hagar or for Ishmael. Now, God says to Abraham, verse 12, let it not be grievous in thy sight because of the lad and because of thy bondwoman.

In all that Sarah has said unto thee, hearken unto her voice. For in Isaac shall thy seed be called. Now, it's interesting now that the first time Sarah suggested to Abraham, look, we're getting older.

I know you have this seed thing you keep talking about. I understand we're going to have kids. We're getting older.

You know, your God's not doing anything. Maybe, you know, you take my handmaid. And that was the custom, was the culture.

And it says there that Abraham hearken to the voice of his wife. And he shouldn't have. And he does this thing in the flesh, this bondwoman giving birth, an Egyptian, to Ishmael.

And it was not God's plan. Now, Abraham's not listening to Sarah because he said, I think, and I did this once before and got in trouble. Now, God comes to Abraham and says, hearken to thy wife.

And it's interesting that you wouldn't think in this circumstance because it almost seems, you know, tactless in a sense. And yet, God says to Abraham, no, I want you to hearken to the voice of your wife now. In all that she says, I want you to listen.

And also of the son, God says now, of the bondwoman, I will make a nation because he is thy seed. Because of you, Abraham, I will bless him. And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and he took bread and a bottle of water and gave it unto Hagar, putting it on her shoulder and the child and sent her away.

And she departed and wandered in the wilderness of Beersheba. Now, I imagine that it was God's instruction by what happens after this that Abraham probably want to send servants and gold. We know, we're told in chapter 13, that Abraham is overloaded with gold and silver and great goods.

And he could have sent away with Ishmael, whom he loved, and Hagar, no doubt, burrows and servants and guards and gold and food. No doubt, it was God that has spoken to Abraham and said, Abraham, I want you to send her away with a bottle of water and with bread. Verse 15 says, the water was spent in the bottle, and she cast the child, and he's 12 to 14 now, under one of the shrubs in the shade in the desert area.

And she went and sat down over against him a good way off, as it were, a bow shot, as far as you can shoot an arrow. For she said in her heart, the idea is, let me not see the death of the child. And she sat over against him, went away off and thought, he's laying there, he's going to expire.

She puts him under this bush. She sits at a distance and says, I don't want to be close enough to see his last breath. And she lifts up her voice and she weeps now.

And God heard the voice of the lad. Notice, we don't know what Ishmael was saying. And the angel of God, not the angel of the Lord now, as it was in chapter 16, an angel of God called to Hagar out of heaven and said to her, what aileth thee, Hagar? Fear not, for God hath heard the voice of the lad where he is.

Now, when the angel of the Lord spoke to her back in chapter 16, he spoke for himself, I will do this and I will bless. Now it's an angel of God from heaven saying, God is going to bless and so forth. But no doubt, God allowed her to get in a situation.

God said to Abraham, just send her away with one container of water and some bread. Don't send her with everything you want to send her with, because I want to deal with God's design for Hagar to come to the desert, as it is sometimes in our lives. And it was God's design for her to run out of our own resources.

And somehow in that circumstance, it says God heard the voice of the lad. We don't know what Ishmael was saying. Ishmael grew up under Abraham.

No doubt Ishmael believed in Yahweh God, El Shaddai, the God of Abraham. And Ishmael must have been laying under the bush praying, saying, oh God of my father Abraham, if you're there, I'm perishing, I'm dying. And it says God heard the voice of the lad.

Isn't that interesting? Hagar, an Egyptian, it seems, weeping, the boy praying. I've heard the voice of the lad. And the angel of God called to Hagar out of heaven, saying to her, what of thee, Hagar, fear not, God hath heard the voice of the lad.

Arise, lift up the lad and hold him in thine hand, for I will make him a great nation. And God, isn't it interesting, opened her eyes and she saw a well of water. And she went and filled the bottle with water and gave the lad to drink.

So here she was in a circumstance. Isn't it interesting how God can blind us? She's sitting in a circumstance without an ability to see refreshment. Isn't that interesting? You know, no doubt it's by God's design that God had allowed her to come into this desert experience.

I hear many Christians say, you know, I'm in such a dry place. You know, I'm having a desert experience. And in my mind, I'm thinking so, because, because the desert is prescribed.

We're never there by mistake. Now, no doubt, if there's deliberate sin in our lives and our fellowship with God breaks down because of unconfessed sin, we can be in a difficult place. But many times I hear of Christians that are doing and responding to the circumstances around them in a godly way that they have no control over.

And they're moving forward in life in a difficult situation or just have not sensed his presence. And there's no sin. And they're saying, you know, I'm really in a desert.

And I think, you know, God leads to the desert. It says in Deuteronomy chapter eight, that he led the children of Israel in the desert for 40 years, that they might learn that man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God, that God allowed man to fall out of heaven that their fathers had not known and that God cared for them so that they might discover that he was more than they knew that he was, that he would put them in an environment where they'd be totally dependent upon him. And then the bread of heaven would fall and they would discover something of him they had never seen before.

And then the desert seems to break forth with streams. And I think for you, if you're in that dry place tonight, and it's not because of sin, I think you can relax there. You can say, all right, Lord, you've led me to this desert as you led the children of Israel in the desert, as you led Hagar into the desert.

And the desert is not a bad place. It's prescribed. It's part of our education.

And I think soon as you relax there and realize that the good shepherd has led you there. And the desert has its own beauty. As soon as you relax there, you'll find the water gushing forth.

You'll find that there are springs in the desert. And here Hagar sent away with, it seems, so little sustenance by a man that loved her and Ishmael so greatly, coming into the desert, running out of her own resources and having God confirm to her again, once again, this covenant that he would bless this boy. And then God opened her eyes and allowed her to see right in her desert circumstances, a spring of life-giving water.

And I think if you're in the desert, maybe you just need to ask God to open your eyes. Maybe there is close to you in a place that you have not perceived a spring of water, something that you need to see flowing directly from the hand of God, a well that is to be a reflection, a part of the heart of God in your life. God opened her eyes.

She saw a well of water and she went and filled the bottle with water and gave the lad to drink. And God was with the lad and he grew and he dwelled in the wilderness and became an archer. And he dwelled in the wilderness of Paran, northern Saudi Arabia, that area of Sinai.

And his mother took him a wife out of the land of Egypt. That's her homeland, an Egyptian wife for Ishmael. We could take a run at it.

Here we go. It came to pass at that time that Abimelech, now this is again a title like Pharaoh, we don't know if it's the same Abimelech or Anuba, Abimelech is in power, and Phicol, that's the chief captain of his host. They came and spoke to Abraham saying, God is with thee in everything that you do.

Now he knows Abraham's a prophet. He knows when Abraham prayed for him, his whole family got healed. He knows that it was his God that rained down fire on Sodom and Gomorrah.

Now he sees Abraham at 100 and Sarah at 90 having a baby. He thinks, man, God blesses this guy in every way. He says to him, swear unto me.

Now Phicol and Abimelech are in much greater power than Abraham. Abraham is a shepherd, a man dwelling in tents. This is a king of a kingdom called the Philistines here, not the later Philistines that we will understand, but archaeologists of late have realized that there was trade by sea by the remnant of the Phoenicians even at that early time, and that there was a civilization akin to the Philistines that began to spring up even in Abraham's time.

So now therefore swear unto me here by God that you will not deal falsely with me, now Abraham's done that once with him, nor with my son, nor with my son's son, but according to the kindness that I have done unto thee, thou shalt do unto me and to the land wherein thou hast sojourned. And Abraham said, I will swear, we'll make a truce here. But Abraham reproved Abimelech because of a well of water which Abimelech's servants had violently taken away.

Now if you've been to Israel with us, to that part of the world, you know how important a well is. They're far and few between in some of the dry areas. Abraham says, okay, I'll make a covenant with you, but while you're a little afraid of me, I'll take the time to pick a bone too.

You know, I dug a well and your guys took it away from me. Abimelech says, well, I didn't know who did this thing. Neither did anybody tell me.

I didn't hear anything about it even to this day. Abimelech's all apologetic. Look, I didn't know nothing about it.

Nobody told if I'd have known, I'd have done something. So Abraham took sheep and oxen and gave them unto Abimelech, and both of them made a covenant. And Abraham said, seven hew lambs of the flock by themselves.

And Abimelech said unto Abraham, well, what do these seven hew lambs mean, which thou hast said by themselves? And he said, well, these seven hew lambs, for them thou shalt take of my hand, that they may be a witness unto me that I have digged this well. These seven hew lambs are going to remind you that this well is my well. Abraham's stuck on a well.

He's going to make a covenant, but leave the well alone. Wherefore, he called the place Beersheba, which is the well of oath, the well of swearing or the well of the oath, because there they swear both of them. Thus they made a covenant at Beersheba.

Then Abimelech rose up with Phicol, the chief captain of his host, and they returned into the land of the Philistines, Moses writes. And Abraham planted a grove in Beersheba and called on the name of the Lord, the everlasting God, El Olam there. And Abraham sojourned in the Philistines land many days.

Very interesting. Abraham planted a grove, dry area. He plants the tamarisk trees.

I have a book on some of the flora and fauna of the Holy Land. And it's very interesting. There are 12 species of tamarisk trees in Israel.

Isn't that interesting? 12 tribes, 12 different species of tamarisk trees that grow in the land. Abraham planted them like Johnny Appleseed everywhere he went, it seems. He he plants these tamarisk trees.

He liked the desert, but he liked the shade. So he plants a grove there and he calls on El Olam. You know, El Shaddai, the Almighty.

But Abraham's growing. Now he's calling on El Olam, which is the everlasting God. Imagine what a concept that is for a shepherd 4,000 years ago.

Calling on the everlasting, the eternal God. That is quite a remarkable thing. And he lived there for 25, 30 years and raised Isaac in quietness.

We have no record, by the way, that God spoke to him during that time. I think sometimes we we kind of think of some of these Old Testament prophets as kind of walking every day, having kind of a Vulcan mind melt with God or something. You know, they're they're always plugged in or something.

You know, it really seems that there were long periods of time sometimes when when Isaiah did not hear and when Ezekiel did not hear and when Abraham did not hear. He lives there quietly in Beersheba, it

says, for many years. Watches Isaac go through potty training and the terrible twos and his first skateboard and Nintendo 64.

You know, he watches him go through the things that everybody watches their kids go through, watches him grow. Abraham calling on the everlasting God, teaching Isaac from the time Abraham is 100 to 130 years old, he sits with this young boy. The sole focus of his attention.

What a remarkable teacher. What a remarkable experience for a young man to grow 30 years with this old sage, a prophet who knows the one true living God, whose neighbors stand in awe of him, not because of any great bundles or anything, but because of his relationship with God. What favor we can have with God and man.

How remarkable and calling on the everlasting God, the eternal God. Let's stand and pray.

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