



Isaac: Child of Promise

Lesson Focus

God confirmed His covenant with Abram. God changed Abram's name to Abraham and Sarai's name to Sarah. Even though Abraham thought Ishmael would fulfill God's promises, God miraculously gave Isaac to Abraham and Sarah in their old age. Isaac was the promised child who would inherit God's covenant with Abraham.

Key Passages

Genesis 17:1–27, 21:1–21; Galatians 3:16

What You Will Learn

- God's faithfulness in keeping His promise to Abraham.
- The descendant of Abraham who would bless all nations.

Memory Verse

Genesis 12:1–2 Now the LORD said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing."

Prepare to Learn

Scriptural Background

Thirteen years had passed since Abram and Sarai tried to fulfill God's promise of a descendant through human means. Sarai gave her servant Hagar to Abram, and Abram and Hagar had a son, Ishmael. When God appeared to Abram at the beginning of Genesis 17, He identified Himself as El Shaddai, which is translated "Almighty God." This name also includes sovereignty and kingship. God confirmed His covenant with Abram and changed his name from Abram (exalted father) to Abraham (father of a multitude). God also changed the name of Sarai (my princess) to Sarah (princess). God said Abraham would have many descendants who would inherit the land of Canaan. He also instituted circumcision for Abraham and his descendants as a sign of His covenant (Genesis 17:10-14). When God told Abraham that Sarah would bear a child at age 90, Abraham laughed. He then asked God if Ishmael was the promised son. God replied that Sarah would bear a son named Isaac, who would inherit the covenant. However, God blessed Ishmael for Abraham's sake and said that Ishmael's descendants would also become a great nation. Abraham, Ishmael, and the rest of the males in his house were circumcised in obedience to God's command (Genesis 17:23-27).

Following Genesis 17, several events occurred before the birth of Isaac in chapter 21. God and two angels appeared as men to visit Abraham. God again told Abraham that Sarah would have a son. Sarah laughed in doubt when she heard this and then denied that she'd laughed when the Lord confronted her unbelief (Genesis 18:10-15). Then the Lord told Abraham His plan to bring judgment on the wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. Genesis 19 recounts the angels entering the wicked city of Sodom to save Lot and his family before the Lord rained fire and brimstone on the cities to destroy them for their sin. Then Abraham journeyed south to Gerar. In fear for his life, Abraham lied to king Abimelech and said Sarah was his sister and not his wife. This led to Sarah being taken into Abimelech's household. God intervened to spare Sarah and restore her to Abraham.

In Genesis 21, we see the Lord visiting Sarah to enable her to conceive, just as He had promised. She bore a son at the time God had said. Abraham was 100 years old and Sarah was 90. They named their son Isaac, which means *laughter*. Finally, the child of promise arrived! Isaac would inherit all the wonderful promises God had made to Abraham, including the promise of a Savior, Jesus, who would come from his descendants (Galatians 3:16).

Historical/Apologetics Background

The two sons of Abraham, Ishmael and Isaac, illustrate the consequences of sin and the mercy of God. Abraham and Sarah are both commended in the Bible for their faith (Hebrews 11:8–19), but they made mistakes. They got impatient waiting for a son, and Sarah thought that Abraham’s line could continue through her servant Hagar. From the time Hagar found out that she was pregnant by Abraham, trouble began. Hagar despised Sarah, and Sarah responded by mistreating her. Hagar ran away, and God met her in the wilderness and instructed her to return to Abraham and Sarah (Genesis 16:7–9). Hagar obeyed and gave birth to Ishmael, whose name means “God hears,” because God heard Hagar’s affliction (Genesis 16:11). When God spoke to Abraham in Genesis 17, He specifically said that Sarah would have a son and become a mother of nations (Genesis 17:16). God also made it clear that Ishmael was not the promised son, but God was merciful and blessed Ishmael for Abraham’s sake.

The family conflict continued after Isaac was born. When Isaac was weaned, Sarah saw Ishmael mocking at the feast, and she told Abraham to send Hagar and Ishmael away. She wanted no competition for her son as the heir. This was troubling to Abraham, who loved Ishmael, but God said to send them away. Abraham complied, and Hagar and Ishmael departed. God provided water for them in the wilderness and watched

over them. Ishmael became an archer and eventually married an Egyptian (Genesis 21:20–21). He and his descendants remained in Arabia and multiplied just as God had promised.

While God was faithful to fulfill His promises to make both sons into great nations, Abraham’s family conflict grew into national conflict. This was a consequence of Abraham and Sarah taking matters into their own hands instead of waiting for God’s timing. Today, we see the conflict continuing between some of the descendants of Ishmael, the Arab people, and the descendants of Isaac, the Jewish people. Middle Eastern conflicts often take center stage in world politics and force other nations to take sides.

As Christians, we know that God will accomplish His perfect will for the nation of Israel (and the rest of the world). He is in control of events that will lead to the fulfillment of His Word. We should not be alarmed or anxious when we hear of conflict and unrest, for those are signs of Jesus’ soon return. Jesus said in Mark 13:7–8, “And when you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be alarmed. This must take place, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be earthquakes in various places; there will be famines. These are but the beginning of the birth pains.” Conflict will continue until Jesus comes again, but now is the time of mercy—the time for people to be saved. Let us work

for the Lord in light of His return For more information on this when He will abolish the Curse and topic, see the Online Resource Page. establish His righteous reign.

Studying God's Word

Who is the offspring promised to Abram??

Take notes as you study the following passages.

Genesis 17:1–27

Genesis 21:1–21

Abraham's Seed

Working in small groups, answer the questions below.

1. Read the following passages and look for two common threads. Record them in the space below. Romans 4:1–5:2; Galatians 3:1–18
2. Looking at the Galatians passage above, what does Paul clarify about the offspring (or Seed) promised to Abraham? (This is a reference to Genesis 22:18.)

3. God promised Abraham that all of the nations of the world would be blessed through him (Genesis 12:3). Jesus is the Seed of Abraham. How have the nations of the world been blessed in Him?
4. Was Abraham a sinful man?
5. Was Abraham counted righteous because of his works?
6. Is any person ever counted as righteous because of their works?
7. What is the connection between faith and righteousness?
8. If Abraham was saved, his sins must have been covered. How was Jesus involved in Abraham's righteousness?
9. How is your hope of salvation in Christ different from Abraham's?

God's Word in the Real World

1. How has your view of earning righteousness changed in light of the passages we have looked at today?

2. Many people believe that they are good people and that God will accept them based on all the good things they have done or because their good deeds outnumber their bad deeds. How could you use Abraham to help them understand the error of their thinking?

3. In what way do we see God's promise of giving Abraham a son fulfilled in multiple persons? How does this help us understand other prophecies in the Bible?

4. What dangerous traps do we tend to fall into when we begin thinking that our works can or have earned us a righteous standing before God?

5. Why is adding some type of work to the gospel so appealing to us?

6. Can you recognize any areas in your life right now where you are waiting on God's timing? How can you continue to trust God in this situation?

Prayer Requests
