

## Genesis Chapter 16 – “The God who sees”

Now Sarai, Abram’s wife, had borne him no *children*. And she had an Egyptian maidservant whose name was Hagar. <sup>2</sup> So Sarai said to Abram, “See now, the LORD has restrained me from bearing *children*. Please, go in to my maid; perhaps I shall obtain children by her.” And Abram heeded the voice of Sarai. <sup>3</sup> Then Sarai, Abram’s wife, took Hagar her maid, the Egyptian, and gave her to her husband Abram to be his wife, after Abram had dwelt ten years in the land of Canaan. <sup>4</sup> So he went in to Hagar, and she conceived. And when she saw that she had conceived, her mistress became despised in her eyes. <sup>5</sup> Then Sarai said to Abram, “My wrong *be* upon you! I gave my maid into your embrace; and when she saw that she had conceived, I became despised in her eyes. The LORD judge between you and me.” <sup>6</sup> So Abram said to Sarai, “Indeed your maid *is* in your hand; do to her as you please.” And when Sarai dealt harshly with her, she fled from her presence. <sup>7</sup> Now the Angel of the LORD found her by a spring of water in the wilderness, by the spring on the way to Shur. <sup>8</sup> And He said, “Hagar, Sarai’s maid, where have you come from, and where are you going?” She said, “I am fleeing from the presence of my mistress Sarai.” <sup>9</sup> The Angel of the LORD said to her, “Return to your mistress, and submit yourself under her hand.” <sup>10</sup> Then the Angel of the LORD said to her, “I will multiply your descendants exceedingly, so that they shall not be counted for multitude.” <sup>11</sup> And the Angel of the LORD said to her: “Behold, you *are* with child, And you shall bear a son. You shall call his name Ishmael, Because the LORD has heard your affliction. <sup>12</sup> He shall be a wild man; His hand *shall be* against every man, And every man’s hand against him. And he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren.” <sup>13</sup> Then she called the name of the LORD who spoke to her, You-Are-the-God-Who-Sees; for she said, “Have I also here seen Him who sees me?” <sup>14</sup> Therefore the well was called Beer Lahai Roi; observe, *it is* between Kadesh and Bered. <sup>5</sup> So Hagar bore Abram a son; and Abram named his son, whom Hagar bore, Ishmael. <sup>16</sup> Abram was eighty-six years old when Hagar bore Ishmael to Abram.

Introduction

Briefly the story so far concerning Abram in Genesis reads like this.

In Genesis chapter 12 God called Abram to leave his own country and travel in faith to a place that God would show him. Eventually that land was revealed to be the land of Canaan.

God promised to make a great nation from his descendants. He promised to protect Abram by blessing those who bless him and cursing those people who opposed him.

God also promised that all the families of the earth would be blessed through him.

There were two problems for Abram concerning God’s promises.

Firstly his wife Sarai was barren, she couldn’t have any children. The second problem was that when he arrived in Canaan, the land that God promised him, he discovered that it was full of people who were not going to move out the way and let Abram occupy the whole land.

Nevertheless Abram worshipped God and faithfully followed God’s leading.

After a while there was a famine in the land and Abram went down with his wife and family to Egypt to get food. It was in Egypt that Abram made his first mistake. He lied to the Egyptians about his wife. He told them that she was his sister. He did this because he feared their reaction if they knew the truth. Abram thought that they would kill him and take his wife into Pharaoh’s household.

Abram’s first mistake was that he didn’t really trust 100% in God’s promise to protect him.

However God kept his promise. He brought great plagues in Pharaoh’s household, after this it was discovered that Sarai was in fact not Abram’s sister but was his wife.

Abram was deported from Egypt with his wife and family.

Abram repented of his sin and then got back into a right relationship with God.

When Abram returned to Canaan there were problems between Abram's family and his herdsmen and his nephew Lot's family and herdsmen. They decided that to avoid conflict that they would go separate ways. Abram took the humble approach and gave Lot a choice of any part of the land that was not occupied. Lot chose the plain of Jordan quite close to the city of Sodom.

The choice he made seemed right on a human level, but later it resulted in him being involved in a local war. He and his family were captured and taken prisoner.

However Abram, with the help of his 318 servants made a night raid on the enemy camp and rescued Lot and his family and all his possessions.

After this successful mission the king of Sodom tried to influence Abram by offering him money and goods. Abram refused to take anything from him. He declared his allegiance by giving his tithe to Melchizedek, king of Salem (Jerusalem)

We discovered that Melchizedek was a type of Christ. He acknowledged that he followed the same God as Abram, the God Most High, possessor of heaven and earth.

Following this God made a covenant with Abram to confirm all the promises that He had made in Genesis chapter 12.

We discovered last week from Genesis 15 v. 6 that Abram believed in God's promises and it was accounted to him for righteousness.

God placed His righteousness into Abram's spiritual bank account.

We learnt one very important thing about this covenant compared to all other covenants at this time. The important thing was that normally when a covenant was made in those days, both parties walked through between the cut animals.

However in this case God put Abram into a deep sleep and only God walked between the animals in the form of a smoking oven and a burning torch. This signified that it was only God's responsibility of keeping the covenant.

Although Abram had to keep trusting God, it was God's responsibility to fulfill the covenant promise.

God also gave Abram a geography lesson and pointed out to him the extent of the land that he would occupy in the future. This was from the river of Egypt that is the great Nile River, to the river Euphrates.

You would think that now Abram would feel quite safe and secure and wait for God to act upon his promises.

However that was not the case. Time moved on and with time came temptation and uncertainty.

Let us now move into chapter 16.

There are 3 things that I would like you to notice in this chapter.

1. Abram listened to the wrong voice – v. 1-2.
2. Abram paid the price of disobedience. – v. 3-6.
3. God poured His "GRACE" into the problem. – 7-16.

1. Abram listened to the wrong voice – v. 1-2.

It had been 10 years since God first promised that Abram would have a child. We know from the text (v. 3) that the gap of time between chapter 12 and chapter 16 was 10 years.

Remember that Sarai was barren and past child bearing age. She had waited 10 years for God to perform this miracle birth and it hadn't happened.

So instead of waiting for God to perform a miracle, she decided to take the matter into her own hands.

Sarai poured her human wisdom into God's divine plan. She was not prepared to wait any longer for God.

Her mistake was not believing that God was able to miraculously fulfill His promise and provide her a child through the seed of Abraham.

If Sarai had really believed in God's promise she would have waited for God to produce a miracle, in His time.

However Sarai had a better idea than waiting for God to produce a miracle. She decided to offer Abram one of her maids in order for him to have a child through her. This seemed a good idea to Sarai at the time.

Sadly the text tells us that Abram heeded the voice of Sarai. (v. 2)

Remember back in Genesis chapter 3 how Eve heeded the voice of Satan and was persuaded to eat the fruit of the tree that God had commanded her not to eat.

It was the same situation here. Sarai listened to the voice of Satan and Abram listen to his wife Sarai.

I would like to stop for a moment and make an application here.

The biggest problem that all Christians face in life is "listening to the wrong voice"

The biggest battle that a Christian faces is the battle of the mind.

If Satan can influence your mind, then he will very soon begin to influence your decisions and your behavior. We live in a world today that is so removed from God's wisdom, and God's word, the Bible, that even believing Christians do not often wait to trust God for a miracle in a difficult situation.

I know that it is very difficult to trust God fully in a situation, when your circumstances give no evidence that God is with you and about to work on your behalf.

I remember 32 years ago sitting down with a lovely Baptist minister and telling him that I really felt that God was calling me to sell up my home and go to Bible College in Edinburgh Scotland. He listened to my story and then he asked how I was going to provide for my wife and family and my Bible College fees.

I replied that I was going to sell everything I had including my home and then when the money ran out I would trust God to provide for me, because He was calling me to serve Him.

Sadly the Baptist minister said, "God doesn't provide miracles by faith".

Then He proceeded to give me human examples of people who had lived by faith and he had personally had to provide for them. He was trying to persuade me that today we can't trust God for His provisions in a miraculous way.

Fortunately I did not heed the voice of wisdom from this man, I continued to trust in the voice of God, from the Bible.

The Bible text in Philippians chapter 4: v. 19 is deeply imbedded into my heart and mind. (N.K.J.)

<sup>19</sup> And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

This promise was given to a Church that was faithful in their financial giving.

I knew that if I was faithful in my tithes and my giving to God's work then He would provide for me.

Therefore for 32 years I have seen God's miraculous provision for the needs of my wife and family. It has not been easy, we have had to wait sometimes for the last moment for God to provide. We have also had to do without things, when they were not essential to our basic needs.

My advice is to always listen to the voice of God, who speaks through His word, the Bible. There are plenty of voices in the world today, telling you to do all sorts of things, but there is only one God, and He speaks through His word.

Remember David in 2 Samuel Chapter 24: v. 10-14. (N.K.J.)

<sup>10</sup> And David's heart condemned him after he had numbered the people. So David said to the LORD, "I have sinned greatly in what I have done; but now, I pray, O LORD, take away the iniquity of Your servant, for I have done very foolishly." <sup>11</sup> Now when David arose in the morning, the word of the LORD came to the prophet Gad, David's seer, saying, <sup>12</sup> "Go and tell David, 'Thus says the LORD: "I offer you three *things*; choose one of them for yourself, that I may do *it* to you.'"" <sup>13</sup> So Gad came to David and told him; and he said to him, "Shall seven years of famine come to you in your land? Or shall you flee three months before your enemies, while they pursue you? Or shall there be three days' plague in your land? Now consider and see what answer I should take back to Him who sent me." <sup>14</sup> And David said to Gad, "I am in great distress. Please let us fall into the hand of the LORD, for His mercies *are* great; but do not let me fall into the hand of man."

Even in His punishment David chose to fall into God's hands rather than into the hands of man.

Always chose God's way and He will honour you.

## 2. Abram paid the price of disobedience – v. 3-6.

Abram took the advice of his wife and had a child through her maid called Hagar.

You would expect Sarai to be pleased with the result. After all it was her suggestion in the first place. As soon as her maid Hagar had conceived Sarai became despised in her eyes. In v. 5 we are told that Sarai blamed Abram for the situation.

Abram then shifted the blame back to Sarai and said it's your maid, do what you like with her. The result was that Sarai dealt harshly with Hagar. As a result Hagar ran away from Sarai.

Because Abram listen to the wrong voice, the voice of his wife, he paid the price of that disobedience.

The Bible is very clear that whatever we sow we shall also reap.

Turn with me to Galatians Chapter 6: v. 7-10. (N.K.J.)

<sup>7</sup> Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. <sup>8</sup> For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of

the Spirit reap everlasting life. <sup>9</sup> And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart. <sup>10</sup> Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.

There are not many people today who are prepared to take responsibilities for their own mistakes. They usually blame other people, and seek for other people to make things right for them without actually taking responsibility for their own situation.

People who never learn by their mistakes, always keep making them.

God is very clear on this subject, so we need to be very careful what we sow.

Turn with me to 2 Corinthians 9: v. 6- 8. (N.K.J.)

<sup>6</sup> But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. <sup>7</sup> So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver. <sup>8</sup> And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work.

Paul is talking about money here. He is NOT saying that if you put lots of money in the offering at O.I.C. that God is going to count it and give you back lots more than you put into the offering.

What he is saying here is that it is "HOW" you give that matters.

If you give your tithes and offerings with a generous spirit in your heart, then you will receive a spiritual reward. In v. 8 it says that you will always have what you need.

Sadly Abram messed things up for himself, his wife and for Hagar. Why did it happen? It happened because he listened to the wrong voice, made a bad decision and reaped the consequences of that decision.

May God help us to think and to pray much before we make big decisions in our lives, because there will always be consequences from those actions and decisions.

We will reap what we sow. God is not mocked.

### 3. God poured His "GRACE" into the problem – v. 7-16.

Sarai made a bad decision, Abram made a bad decision, Hagar's life is now messed up. So she ran away. She stopped by a spring of water in the wilderness.

Abram abdicated his responsibility to Sarai and Sarai treated Hagar badly. Who was left to help Hagar?

The text tells us that the "Angel of the Lord" cared about her situation.

The first question we need to ask is "who is the Angel of the Lord"

Many scholars believe that when the "Angel of the Lord" is mentioned in the Old Testament, it represents an appearance of Jesus Christ.

From the context of the situation here and the decisions made by the "Angel of the Lord" it would appear that we are dealing with a personal appearance of Jesus Christ in the Old Testament. This is called in theological terms a "Theophany"

First of all Jesus tells Hagar to return to Sarai and submit to her. Then Jesus seeks to explain the future of her child and about the greatness of her descendants.

Sadly her son, who will be called Ishmael, was going to be a wild character.

(History informs us that the “Arab Nation came from this child.)

Nevertheless Hagar was encouraged that “Somebody Cared”, and when that somebody turned out to be Jesus, she called Him, “you are the God who sees”.

God saw Hagar in her need, and He spoke truth to her heart. The last thing that Hagar felt like was returning to Sarai who treated her badly. However this was the advice of God and she needed to obey.

#### Application

When the “Grace” of God is poured into a situation it is not always a quick fix for your problems. However you will know what you need to do and you will know that God is instructing you what to do. The way out of a difficult problem is to follow God’s instructions and not to seek solutions of the flesh.

A young man went to his Pastor for help one day. He was seriously in debt. His Pastor said “Do you tithe 10% of your income into the Church?” The young man said “NO, I can’t afford to.” That is your problem. The way out of your debts is to start obeying God’s word, and as your problem is spending money that you haven’t got, you better start learning to tithe.

The young man was rather reluctant, but he took his Pastor’s advice, he was soon out of debt because he discovered that he had not brought God’s word into all of his life and decisions, including how and what he spent his money on.

When the GRACE of God is poured into a problem, and the person who has the problem starts obeying the Bible, then very positive things start happening.

May God help us to respond to His GRACE and His ADVICE when we face problems.