

GENESIS 16: THE FLESH DOES NOT FULFILL THE PROMISE

(or *The Real Housewives of Canaan*)

Last week we saw how God confirmed His covenant with Abram through the barath. They actually cut a deal. It is important to note that Abram was asleep while the deal was being finalized. This meant that Abram could not have any part in fulfilling it. The entire deal was based on God's goodness and His faithfulness.

This shows us how grace works. Everything is based on God's grace and His faithfulness. His righteousness is imputed to us. We are seen as righteous because of being in the body of Christ. Salvation is free, because we can't earn it and we can't pay for it. It was bought by the blood of Jesus.

Vance Havner often said, "*The detour is always worse than the main road.*"

This detour not only brought pain and suffering into Abram's and Sarai's home, it also put in place all the pieces for the Arab- Israeli conflict.

This week we will study chapter 16 where we will see that when God's plans don't come when we expect them to, people get antsy and attempt to fulfill the promise themselves. So let's turn to Genesis chapter 16.

Gen 16:1 Now Sarai, Abram's wife, had borne him no *children*. And she had an Egyptian maidservant whose name was Hagar.

Gen 16:2 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.

Gen 16:3 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.

Gen 16:4 So he went in to Hagar, and she conceived. And when she saw that she had conceived, her mistress became despised in her eyes.

Gen 16:5 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."

Gen 16:6 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.

If we look on down at verse 16 we can see that Abram has been in the land of Canaan around 10 years. Abram entered the land when he was 75. So after 10 years Sarai got a little antsy. She wanted a baby and didn't believe that she could have children after all this time of being barren. It is apparent that she believed Abram still capable of fathering children.

It is important to note that it was considered a curse for a woman to be barren. Having children was a sign of wealth and prosperity. The more children a woman could have, the higher the social status she achieved. Sarai however had not had any children. In her mind she was barren and no longer wanted to wait on God, so she appealed to a culturally accepted remedy.

You may recall what will later be called the Levirate marriage where if a man died without having a son, then his brother was to take that man's wife and produce a son to take care of her. This is similar even though we haven't gotten to the institution of the Law.

In this case, a woman would "give" her maid to her husband in order that the maid might conceive a child in her stead. This child would then be the legal heir and the wife would be credited with having a child, in a sense.

We can't really grasp this concept, but it wasn't seen as a fling or a one-night stand. It wasn't something you would hear about in the next hit country song. It was simply a way of producing an heir. It is also important to see that God didn't condone this behavior. It was a cultural thing. God however didn't strike anyone down with lightning either. If we look throughout history we can see that God often uses us in spite of our cultural anomalies, not because of them. So the next time someone tells you the Bible condones such things, you should ask them where it is condoned. It is not. Then you can point out that God uses us in spite of our cultural peculiarities.

Sarai became impatient. "Why was God waiting so long?" she asked. The reason is that He wanted Abram and Sarai to be, "as good as dead" when Isaac was born. In this way, God alone would have all the glory. In a sense, Sarai's attempt at fulfilling God's will was robbing God of His glory.

Rom. 14:23

"For whatsoever is not of faith is sin"

What is done by faith is done for the glory of God....

Rom. 4:20,21

20 No unbelief made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, 21 fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised.

A willingness to wait on the Lord is another sign of faith.

Isa. 28:16B

He that believes shall not be in haste.

A third evidence of faith is that you are acting on the authority of God's Word .

Rom. 10:17

So, then, faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God.

Sarai was acting out of impatience and unbelief.

Finally, when you act in faith, God gives you joy and peace in your life.

Rom. 15:13

Now the God of hope, fill you with all joy and peace in believing...

This decision brought anything but peace into her home.

Abram hearkened to Sarai. This time he should not have. Later, God says that he should hearken to her.

Secular history says that Hagar was acquired as a handmaid when Abram and Sarai had previously gone to Egypt during the famine. It is also said that Hagar's prior relationship to the Egyptian king allowed her to find a wife for Ishmael of royal stock. Because of this, his offspring were referred to as "princes."

Now, once Hagar had conceived, some cattiness crept in between the two women. Imagine that! I believe that Hagar looked down upon Sarai since she had yet to conceive. Sarai was despised in Hagar's eyes.

Now in verse 5 we see the prerogative of a woman to change her mind. She says to Abram, "My wrong be upon you! Now the Lord can judge

which of us is wrong!" This is a husband and wife thing. I messed up but God is going to get you for it!

Now Abram is the typical guy. He doesn't want any part of this. He isn't about to get in the middle of it. He tells her in verse 6 that Hagar is her maid. She should do whatever she wants to do with her.

I probably would have done the same thing. If momma ain't happy, nobody's happy!

So it says that Sarai dealt harshly with Hagar so she left. Talk about making a reality TV show! This would be a good one.

Gen 16:7 Now the Angel of the LORD found her by a spring of water in the wilderness, by the spring on the way to Shur.

Gen 16:8 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."

Gen 16:9 The Angel of the LORD said to her, "Return to your mistress, and submit yourself under her hand."

Gen 16:10 Then the Angel of the LORD said to her, "I will multiply your descendants exceedingly, so that they shall not be counted for multitude."

Gen 16:11 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.

Gen 16:12 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."

This is the first time we see the phrase, "The Angel of the Lord." (malawk Elohim) It is also the first time the word "angel" is used. If we apply the Law of First mention here, we should expect to see more often than not, that the word angel applies to a Christophany. A Christophany, is a pre-incarnate appearance of Jesus in the flesh. You will note that the

A in Angel is capitalized, and the word LORD is in all caps. This means that this was no ordinary angel. This was Jesus.

Jesus found Hagar by a spring because she had fled the house. Jesus instructed her to return home and submit herself to Sarai. This shows us that Hagar was at least partially at fault. Submitting to someone that has wronged us, especially if they are over us in some way is not an easy thing to do, but it is the Christian thing to do. It shows humility. Humility does not come naturally for most of us. Pride is the natural reaction. It is the reaction of the flesh. Pride usually lands us in trouble. Humility allows us to get through times of persecution.

- Hagar had to submit to God by submitting to Sarai.
- Sarai had to submit to God by allowing Hagar to return with her child.
- Abram had to submit to God by taking charge and not being passive. He had to take Ishmael as his own and support him as well as his mother. Abram abandoned her out of his passivity.

The Angel of the Lord then promised her that this boy's offspring would be so plentiful that they would not be able to be counted. However, the boy would have a wild streak in him. He and his descendants would be hot tempered, and would love to fight. The Ishmaelites are now known for the most part as Arabs.

In Biblical etymology, "Arab" (in Hebrew Arvi) comes both from the desert origin of the Bedouins it originally described (Arava means wilderness). The root 'r-b has several additional meanings in Semitic languages—including "west/sunset," "desert," "mingle," "mixed," "merchant," and "raven"—and are "comprehensible" with all of these having varying degrees of relevance to the emergence of the name. It is also possible that some forms were [metathetical](#) from 'B-R "moving around" (Arabic 'B-R "traverse"), and hence, it is alleged, "nomadic."

From this culture and people group would eventually come the religion of Islam.

In verse 13 we see that Hagar acknowledges the Angel as God.

Gen 16:13 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?"

Gen 16:14 Therefore the well was called Beer Lahai Roi; observe, *it is* between Kadesh and Bered.

Gen 16:15 So Hagar bore Abram a son; and Abram named his son, whom Hagar bore, Ishmael.

Gen 16:16 Abram *was* eighty-six years old when Hagar bore Ishmael to Abram.

Later on in Exodus we will see that it was thought that if anyone saw God then they would die. Hagar acknowledged the Angel as God, and lived. He saw her and she saw Him, and she lived. It is apparent that one could see the LRD in a theophany or Christophany and live. It is only when God appeared "unfiltered," as it were that death was imminent. Beer Lahai Roi, means "the well of seeing alive."

She went back to Abram and Sarai and bore the child, Ishmael. His name means that "God will hear."

Application:

- We can't get impatient with God and His plans for us. It had been 10 years from the promise to this event. It will be another 13 years until Isaac is born.
- God sees time in a moral sense. We have to remember that we are but one cog in the wheel of God's plan. The plan does not revolve around us. There are others involved.

When we get impatient and try to help God, we are no longer walking in the Spirit but walking in the flesh.

Gal 4:22 For it is written that Abraham had two sons: the one by a bondwoman, the other by a freewoman.

Gal 4:23 But he *who was* of the bondwoman was born according to the flesh, and he of the freewoman through promise,

Gal 4:24 which things are symbolic. For these are the two covenants: the one from Mount Sinai which gives birth to bondage, which is Hagar—

Gal 4:25 for this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and corresponds to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children—

Gal 4:26 but the Jerusalem above is free, which is the mother of us all.

- When we attempt to accomplish in the flesh what God wants to do in the Spirit, at best we get a cheap imitation.
- The Middle East problem we see in the news today is because of this very chapter in the Bible. The Palestinians claim that they are the heirs to the land of Israel because Ishmael was the older brother to Isaac. We also see that they often fulfill the prophecy of being wild men against their brothers.
- What are we to make of God blessing Hagar and Ishmael though?
- God was not going to punish Hagar and her son for the wrong of someone else. God blessed her with many offspring.

- God is constantly going behind us and covering up our messes. We are not even aware of all the things He fixes on our account.
- However, we also have to see that when we try to get ahead of God there are long-range consequences. The Israelites will have to deal with the Ishmaelites throughout the Old Testament, and if you watch the news, they are dealing with them still.
- Let's not get impatient. Let's find God's will and walk in it.

Gal 5:16 I say then: **Walk in the Spirit**, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.

Gal 5:17 For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish.

Gal 5:18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

Gal 5:19 Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness,

Gal 5:20 idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies,

Gal 5:21 envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told *you* in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Gal 5:22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,

Gal 5:23 gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.

Gal 5:24 And those *who are* Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

Gal 5:25 If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.

Gal 5:26 Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.