

A Word from Kathy

Few people have come into the world to this kind of anticipation. How exciting it is to finally be reading the chapter that we have looked forward to for so long. Can't you just imagine the excitement all around that area as the news spread? Abraham is 100 years old and his beautiful wife Sarah is now 90 years old and God has given them a son. Could anyone deny that it was God who had blessed their home? This child was the child God had promised and He has been faithful to His word. This should give us hope as we wait for the promises of God.

Read this chapter a couple of times before starting to answer the questions. Remember proper interpretation and application can only come after we have done careful observation. We do not want to jump to any hasty conclusion.

Pray and ask God to lead you in your study of this chapter. Try sharing something you learn this week with someone else. Doing this will help seal it in your heart.

Observation

1. Why had Sarah not had children yet? She is married and they both have longed for a child.
2. What happens in Gen. 21:1 that changes things for her?
3. What do you see in verse 2 that shows this is the child of God's plan and purpose? When did the child arrive?
4. Abraham named his son Isaac. Do you remember why he chose this name? Gen. 17:19
Look up this name and write out the meaning.
5. What act of obedience do you see Abraham faithfully carrying out in verse 4?
6. What had God commanded Abraham in Gen. 17:12?
7. What is Sarah's response to this son born to her? Vs. 6-7
8. Abraham declares a time of feasting. What important event are they celebrating?
How old do you suppose Isaac is when Abraham declares this feast?

9. All too quickly the mood of this story changes. In verses 8-21 we see the result of jealousy in the family unit. How old is Ishmael at this time? (Look back at Gen. 17:24)
What is Ishmael guilty of doing?
10. How does Sarah respond to the actions of Ishmael?
11. In verse 11 what are Abraham's feelings; what mixed emotions is he dealing with that Sarah is not?
12. What happened to Abraham to help him deal with this difficult decision? Note also the promise he was given.
13. Can you picture the scene of Gen. 21:14-16? Abraham provides some supplies and sends Hagar and Ishmael away. The provisions do not last long and their need becomes obvious. With no help in sight what does Hagar choose to do?
14. Hagar allowed the size of her trial to blind her to the truth. What should she have focused on? What did she know about God in a previous experience? If you do not recall go back and look at Gen.16:13-14
15. Ishmael is no longer in the mood to taunt others. What has his desperation caused him to do? God will at times allow things to become difficult for a purpose. What purpose does this difficulty serve?
16. Who appears to Hagar?
What encouragement does he share with her? Vs.17
17. What did God provide that Hagar had not previously seen? Vs.19
18. Was God at work in the details of Ishmael's life?
19. In verses 22-34, we see two men joining together in a covenant relationship.
What did Abimelech ask Abraham to promise? Who did Abimelech want to be the witness to this agreement?
20. What was Abraham's response? Vs. 24
21. Before the covenant can be ratified what does Abraham tell Abimelech?
(It is always best to clear up past problems so you can start with a clean slate.)

22. What was Abimelech's response?
23. How does Abraham bind this promise between the two men?
24. The swearing of an oath makes an agreement binding.
Who were the parties involved?
25. What was the agreement reached?
26. What was the sign of the covenant? Vs.33

The animals of a covenant were cut into pieces and the partners would walk in between them, in token of the compact and the agreement they entered into with each other. This signified that whoever broke the covenant deserved to be cut in pieces just like the animals were.

Interpretation

27. The birth of a son to Abraham and Sarah at their age was considered _____ by human standards but not to God.
28. After studying Abraham and Sarah from Genesis 12-21 what has become obvious concerning their walk of faith?
29. Answered prayers can be such a joyous time. Do you believe Sarah ever sat around complaining about how long it took to receive her promised son after Isaac was born?
30. When you read verses 9-16 did you wish things could have worked out differently? Often when we watch those we love struggling with wrong attitudes and actions and then paying the consequences we want to rush in and save them.
Is that the best thing for them?
What would Ishmael have missed had some other person stepped in?
31. We have seen covenants between God - Noah and God – Abraham. A covenant is a solemn, binding agreement between two individuals, it was not to be entered into lightly.
Now we see a covenant between two men, in Gen. 21:22-34.
What were the terms of this covenant? Vs.23

They exchanged oaths before God, vs.31, what did Abraham do that was to stand as a sign of their covenant for all their descendants who would come to this well in the future?

The name of the place is Beersheba which means "the well of the oath" or "the well of the sevenfold oath". Is this a binding agreement?

Matthew Henry Concise Commentary - When Sarah received the promise in Gen. 18, she laughed with distrust and doubt. When God gives us the mercies we began to despair of, we ought to remember with sorrow and shame our sinful distrust of his power and promise, when we were in pursuit of them.

Application

32. Doing the impossible is God's everyday work. If we leave our problems to God we will find even our big problems can be easily handled.

What impossible problem are you facing today?

33. Have you taken your problem "*...to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine,...*" Eph. 3:20

Have you left it there in confidence knowing that He is your shield and your reward?

This is generally easier to say than to do. It is a matter of waiting for His time, knowing that He is never late.

34. What did you do the last time God miraculously moved on your behalf?

What was your response?

35. How do you handle times of displeasure?

As we saw today Abraham was not happy about sending Ishmael away even though he was old enough to be out on his own. But God calmed his heart and his fears and Abraham obediently did what God made clear. Are you obedient only when it is something you agree with?

36. Are you in any covenant relationships?

37. What have you learned about covenants that you did not previously know?

38. What has God spoken to you about this week through your time in His word?