

DATE: October 12, 2008

TEXT: Genesis 16:1-10

TITLE: "Genesis XIV: Ishmael"



Let me ask you a question... have you ever, as a Christian, made a mistake? Have you ever made a wrong choice that led to terrible consequences? Possibly the mistake was a large mistake. Possibly it impacted many people. I know I have made these mistakes far too often. Today we are looking at mistakes and their consequences. I am not looking at mistakes made by non-believers.... we saw that last week when we saw Sodom and Gomorrah. No, we are looking at mistakes made by believers... mistakes made by you and me. We are looking at the mistakes of Sarah and Abraham that had terrible, terrible consequences. We are going to look at the causes of these mistakes... in the life of Sarah and Abraham and in our lives.

Let me begin with this introduction. We must always remember that Moses was writing the book of Genesis for a purpose. The primary purpose of Moses was to teach his people.... the Israelites as they wandered in the wilderness. His primary purpose was not to give a history of Israel. Let me be clear.... I believe Moses was teaching real and accurate history. But Moses

was teaching history for a purpose. It was not random recording of facts. It was writing of history for a purpose.

What was the purpose of Moses writing the story of Ishmael? In other words what is the overall lesson from Genesis 16 and Genesis 21? The Zondervan Encyclopedia of the Bible describes the primary purpose this way...

(Moses) includes the Ishmael account primarily to bring about a contrast between Isaac and Ishmael, not so much as person but as illustrations of God's working. The point is that God, in fulfilling his promise to Abraham, was in no way bound to the natural and ordinary, i.e. flesh. He allowed the operation of these in the birth of Ishmael but superseded them in the birth of Isaac.

Remember Moses was leading the Israelites in very hostile territory. The people surrounding the Israelites wanted to destroy this nation. These people surrendering Moses were descendants of Ishmael. Moses is reminding his people that they were God's chosen people. He was reminding them that God will guide their paths and give them victory.

This is an important lesson for us today. Truthfully, we are surrounded by hostile people. This is becoming more and more true every year we live as obedient Christians. Just ask our college kids or high school kids what is the response when they stand up for morality on their

campuses. Just ask the man or woman who stands up for Christ in the workplace. Just ask the person who believe that the Word of God should be our primary election guide and be the primary influence on our vote. The result is laughter and mockery. The result is loss of job... poor grades at college... and shunning as “Right wing fanatics.”

Here is the **overriding Lesson from our text** We are the Children of God. I do not say this to bring pride or arrogance. I say this to bring confidence in our Lord. I say this to bring strength in our difficult walk. We are in the wilderness... but the promised land is ahead. Victory is assured. Maybe not as we walk on this earth... truthfully I believe it will get harder and harder as Christians.... but the promised land is ahead. We are the children of Isaac. Paul makes this truth abundantly clear in *Galatians 4*

24These things may be taken figuratively, for the women represent two covenants. One covenant is from Mount Sinai and bears children who are to be slaves: This is Hagar. **25**Now Hagar stands for Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present city of Jerusalem, because she is in slavery with her children. **26**But the Jerusalem that is above is free, and she is our mother. ... **28**Now you, brothers, like Isaac, are children of promise. **29**At that time the son born in the ordinary way persecuted the son born by the power of the Spirit. It is the same now.

Paul is talking to Christians. Paul is talking to you and me. We are children of Isaac. We

are children of the new covenant. We are children of promise. We will inherit the new heavenly Jerusalem. Yes, we will be persecuted... but we are victorious. Hallelujah. Praise be to God. Rejoice! Once we were no people... but now we are his people. The children of the Lord. This is the overall lesson of our text.

But now I want to turn to the sub lesson of the text. Again we see the truth... the only hero in Scripture is God Himself. Not Abraham... not Sarah. In our text we see them making terrible choices that have severe consequences. They fell into great sin. I want us to see 3 reasons for their poor choices.

Reason # 1 They made a poor choice because they failed to trust in the Word of God. In Genesis chapter 15 God makes a covenant with Abraham. We saw this a couple of weeks ago. Part of this covenant is that Abraham would be the father of a great nation. In the very next chapter Sarah decides to take matters in her own hands. She offers to her husband, her maid-servant to produce a child. Surprise, surprise... her husband took her up on the offer.. And went to be with Hagar and Ishmael was born.

The Word of the Lord had been revealed to them. They did not believe or trust in the Word of the Lord. They chose to trust in their own instincts and decisions. We tend to think to ourselves... oh how stupid of Abraham and Sarah. I mean they had the Lord directly appear to them. Abraham has seen the vision of God walking through the sacrificed animals sealing the covenant. Later on Abraham walked with the Lord to Sodom and Gomorrah. How could they be so stupid as to not listen to the Word of God.

But do you understand this fact.... we have far more revelation of God than Abraham and Sarah had. We have the incarnation of God in the form of Jesus Christ. We have the Bible... the very Word of God revealed to you and to me. We have thousands of pages of God's revealed truth at our finger tips. The famous text *2 Timothy 3: 16 states...*

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, 17so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

We have God revealed Word given to us. Page after page after page revealed to us. We, unlike the common men and women of the old testament, have the Holy Spirit in our lives. God himself is with us. What is the primary purpose of the Holy Spirit in our lives? Jesus was clear

this is the role of the Spirit in our lives in *John 16:12* Jesus gives this promise ...

I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. 13But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. 14He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you. 15All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will take from what is mine and make it known to you.

Because Sarah and Abraham did not listen to the Word of God.. They made terrible choices. When we fail to listen to the Word of God we make terrible choices. God gives his Word. God guides his children. God gives his Spirit to lead his children. Are we listening? Are we diving into God's Word expecting insight... expecting truth... expecting to hear God speak to us. If we are not... do not be surprised when we make wrong choices... sometimes terrible, terrible choices.

Reason # 2 Sarah and Abraham made wrong choices because they failed to “wait on the Lord.” *Proverbs 3:5,6* gives this promise...

Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; 6 in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.

Notice this promise has to time line. It does not say.... ‘trust in the Lord until you get what you want.’ It does not say “Trust in the Lord for 5 years or 10 year or 20 years.” It simply

says “trust in the Lord... period”

James 5:7 gives this command

Be patient, then, brothers, until the Lord's coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop and how patient he is for the autumn and spring rains. 8You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near

When will the Lord answer your prayers. I don't know. Will the Lord answer your prayers in this life? Maybe not. Will the Lord fulfill His promises to you. Definitely yes. But we must wait on the Lord. The Lord fulfilled his promise to Abraham. Isaac was born.... 13 to 15 years after the promise was made. Sarah was too old to begin with... so God waited 13 years so she was really old....to prove His point. Trust in the Lord. Trust in His promises. Trust in his miracles. Wait on the Lord.

Finally Reason # 3 Abraham and Sarah made wrong choices because they compromised their morality. Sarah offered her maid to Abraham. Abraham took her maid. Sarah later cast out Hagar and Ishmael to die in the wilderness. Abraham allowed Sarah to mistreat Hagar for year after year after year. God had to directly intervene twice to save the life of Hagar and Ishmael.

Understand this... the practice of Sarah and Abraham was a common practice in this

society. If the wife did not bear an heir... the servant was used to produce a child. Then the wife would take this child and raise this child as her own. This did not happen. It seems that the problem was two sided. Hagar refused to give up her child... and Sarah refused to nurture the child. The result was Ishmael was not a nice child. In *Genesis 21:9* we read this story..

The child grew and was weaned, and on the day Isaac was weaned Abraham held a great feast. 9 But Sarah saw that the son whom Hagar the Egyptian had borne to Abraham was mocking, 10 and she said to Abraham, "Get rid of that slave woman and her son, for that slave woman's son will never share in the inheritance with my son Isaac."

Understand this... Ishmael is not 15 years old. Isaac was 2 years old. The text implies that Ishmael was probably very threatening to this toddler. It scared Sarah. But Sarah had made the choices that resulted in this terrible situation.

The lesson is this..... immorality brings about terrible consequences. The actions of Sarah and Abraham were immoral. It does not matter if it was ‘common practice.’ It does not matter if the actions were accepted by society... God Word is clear.... one wife and fidelity within marriage. Immorality has a terrible consequence.

We live in a day and age where immorality is the norm. Is it worse today than 20 years

ago? I believe very clearly yes. Will it be worse in 20 years? Unfortunately, the answer is probably yes. Is immorality almost accepted today? Just turn on the T.V. to see the answer to this. Has immorality had a terrible, terrible consequence on our society. Clearly yes. Has immorality had a terrible, terrible consequence on our families. Clearly yes. Do we now have children who seem to have very little chance to having a secure happy future. Tragically... yes. Immorality has a terrible consequence. We as Christian must strive to live within the moral values taught in Scripture. It is the only chance we have to protect our own children. It is the only chance we have to make choices that are pleasing to the Lord. It is the only chance we have to live in the joy the Lord has promised to us.

See the consequences of the immorality of Sarah and Abraham. Ishmael became the father of a great nation. He had 12 children... each was a prince of his territory throughout the middle east. Ishmael is the father of the Arabian nation. Ishmael is the father of the Islam faith. The hatred and conflict that existed between Isaac and Ishmael 4000 years ago continues today between Arabs and Israel... between Arabs and Christians.... between Islam and Judaism. All

because of the lack of trust..... the failure to wait on the Lord and the chosen path of immorality of Abraham and Sarah.

Let us today chose the path of truth. We are the children of God. We are the sons and daughter of the new covenant in Jesus Christ. As believers let us trust in the Lord at all times and in all situations.

AMEN