

SUNDAY SCHOOL MATERIALS FOR ADULTS

LESSON 5



THE BIRTH OF ISAAC

Scripture Texts: Genesis 21:1-12; Galatians 4:22-31

God's plan for Abraham was moving forward. The time came for Him to fulfill His promise of a son for Abraham.

God sent Isaac as promised. Ishmael mocked Isaac and was sent away. Ishmael is a type of people under the Law, the Old Testament covenant. If we live after the flesh, we are children of the bondwoman. Isaac is a type of people under the Gospel of Christ, the new covenant. If we live after the Spirit, we are children of the freewoman.

MEMORY VERSE: Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise.

—Galatians 4:28

DAILY READINGS:

- Mon.—**Genesis 16** Birth of Ishmael.
- Tue.—**Luke 1:54-79** The covenant being fulfilled.
- Wed.—**Genesis 20** Abraham's deception.
- Thu.—**Genesis 21:12-21** God's care for Ishmael.
- Fri.—**John 8:31-40** Abraham's seed counted spiritually.

Devotional Reading: Romans 9:14-33 God's righteousness, mercy.

God Keeps His Promises

Genesis 21:1-7 The Lord visited Sarah as he had said— God always keeps His Word. **Abraham was an hundred years old**, Sarah was ninety, and Ishmael was fourteen. **Abraham called the name of his son . . . Isaac**—the name God had given in **Genesis 17:19**. It means *laughter*. Both Abraham and Sarah had laughed when hearing the promise of a son in old age. **Abraham circumcised . . . Isaac . . . as God had commanded in Genesis 17:10-14**—the ordinance which symbolically bound them in covenant with God.

Circumcision was the ordinance God gave as a seal of the covenant He made with Abraham. Since Isaac was to carry on the covenant, he, too, was circumcised, as all his sons were to be. It is **an everlasting covenant (Genesis 17:19)**. Circumcision also continues, not as a physical rite, but in the spiritual life the ordinance symbolizes. Until Christ came, it was circumcision of the flesh. Since He brought the Gospel, it is circumcision of the heart, **made without hands**. It is **putting off . . . the sins of the flesh (Colossians 2:11)**. It is holiness of life. Before Christ, one who was not circumcised was **cut off from his people** for breaking the covenant (**Genesis 17:14**). Now those who are not cleansed from sin and made new creatures in Christ are cut off from God's people (**Galatians 6:15**).

A Casting Out

Genesis 21:8-11 Abraham made a . . . feast—celebrating the first step of progress Isaac had made— weaning. **Sarah saw the son of Hagar . . . mocking**—the son of her servant woman exulting over her free son Isaac, this son of God's promise. Irritated, Sarah **said . . . Cast out this bondwoman and her son: for the son . . . shall not be heir with my son**. Not only Ishmael's presence bothered her, but the prospect of his equality in inheritance from Abraham, father of both him and Isaac. **The thing was very grievous to Abraham**. Why? Because he loved Ishmael.

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This was grievous to the heart of Abraham because Ishmael was his son also, and it gave him pain to cast him out. For the plan of God to be followed in our lives as He would have it, we will find, many times, things that must be cast out of our lives which lay close to our hearts. Similarly, it gives God pain to cast out any of His created people. He loves them all. He is **not willing that any should perish (2 Peter 3:9)**. But the choice lies with us. Unless we **repent**, we are outside of God's family (**Luke 13:3**).

Isaac in God's Plan

Genesis 21:12 God said unto Abraham . . . in all that Sarah hath said . . . **hearken unto her**. It was God's will that Hagar and Ishmael be sent away—for **in Isaac shall thy seed be called**. God's special plan was to be carried on through Isaac, not Ishmael.

Galatians 4:22-23 Abraham had two sons—but they were different. They had different mothers, one a bondwoman and one a freewoman. A son is of the same substance as his parent. Ishmael was born **after the flesh**—just a human, earthly, carnal child. Isaac was born **by promise**—God promised to send him. God had a purpose which, having begun in Abraham was to proceed on through Isaac, on in an ever-progressing plan through his seed, to come to fulfillment in Jesus Christ.

The Two Covenants

Genesis 21:24-31 Which things are an **allegory**—a type. They are symbolic, figurative. They mean something further than the material happenings. **These**—the bondwoman Hagar and the freewoman Sarah—**are the two covenants**. One covenant is that given **from the mount Sinai**—the Law which was given to Moses on that mountain. The Law **gendereth to bondage**—it brought a curse because it showed man his sin but had no power to free him from it. **Which is Agar**—Agar (Hagar) was a type of the Law covenant, or agreement. **This Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to**—corresponds to, or is a type of **Jerusalem which now is**—the capital city of the Jews where the temple was, from which the Law of Moses was administered. This earthly Jerusalem, which stood for the Law, was **in bondage with her children**, the Jews, followers of the Law. Ishmael is a type of followers of the Law. Still, in our present day, all who cling to the works of the Law are in bondage (**Galatians 3:10-11; Romans 3:20**).

But Jerusalem which is above—the heavenly capital city, the church of the living God, from which the Law of Christ, the Gospel, is administered—**is free, which is the mother of us all**. The church is the mother of all the saved, of all those living under the Gospel, set free from the law of sin and death (**Romans 8:2-4**). Sarah was a type of the Gospel covenant or agreement.

Two Sons Were Very Different

Isaac and Ishmael were very different. They were born of different mothers. Their lives and destinies were different. They were treated differently. These things **are written for our admonition**. They apply to us. There are two kinds of people in the world—saved and unsaved, saints and sinners. There is a difference in people living in their own human strength and those living by the power of God. They are born of different sources—one kind **after the flesh**, the other **after the Spirit**. They live differently—one kind in sin, the other in holiness. Their natures are different—one kind has the carnal nature, the other, the divine nature. Their destinies are different—one kind is headed for hell, the other for Heaven. Dear ones, which kind of people are you? Make your calling and election sure.

This lesson is adapted from a lesson by Mary Lehmann.
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