

## The Lord Told Abraham to Cast Out the Bondwoman

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain the illustration in Galatians 4 that is giving us the fact that Abraham was told to cast out the bondwoman and her son. In this topic, we will learn what happened at the time that Abraham did cast out the bondwoman and her son.

Sarah had told Abraham, “Cast out the bondwoman and her son.” Genesis 21:11-13 says, “And the matter was very displeasing in Abraham’s sight because of his son. But God said to Abraham, ‘Do not let it be displeasing in your sight because of the lad or because of your bondwoman. Whatever Sarah has said to you, listen to her voice; for in Isaac your seed shall be called. Yet I will also make a nation of the son of the bondwoman, because he *is* your seed.’” Abraham had raised Ishmael from the time of his birth until the day of the weaning of Isaac, which we said meant that Ishmael was now about sixteen years old.

As a result, the request of Sarah was very displeasing to Abraham. The word translated “displeasing” means *to be in distress or terror*. It is the word that the father of Samuel used when he spoke to Hannah about her sadness because she had no son. 1 Samuel 1:8 says, “Then Elkanah her husband said to her, ‘Hannah, why do you weep? Why do you not eat? And why is your heart grieved? Am I not better to you than ten sons?’” In these verses, we see that Abraham had similar distress as he heard Sarah say, “Cast out the bondwoman and her son.” Instead of enjoying the celebration of the fact that Isaac was now a child, Abraham was in great distress at the thought of sending away Ishmael. Hagar and Ishmael were both very special from the viewpoint of Abraham. It was only the Lord who could give him peace at that moment.

The Lord taught Abraham a very important lesson at that point, but He also gave Abraham a very special promise. Many years later, God used Paul to explain how husbands are to submit to their wives. Ephesians 5:21 says, “submitting to one another in the fear of God.” Then, verses 22-24 explain how a wife submits to her husband. This is followed in verses 25-33, which explains how a husband submits to his wife. Ephesians 5:25-28 says, “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish. So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself.” In these verses, God gave several key ways a husband is to submit to his wife. The husband is to love his wife. The husband is to help his wife grow to spiritual maturity. The husband is to help his wife become holy and without blemish. The husband is to love his wife as he loves his own body.

God told Abraham that his seed would be called in Isaac. This promise is explained more fully in Hebrews 11:18, Romans 9:7, and Galatians 3:16. Galatians 3:16 says, “Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, ‘And to seeds,’ as of many, but as of one, ‘And to your Seed,’ who is Christ.” This verse fulfills the promise first given to Adam, in Genesis 3:15, that a Seed would come from him that would bruise the head of Satan. Romans 9:6-7 says, “But it is not that the word of God has taken no effect. For they *are* not all Israel who *are* of Israel, nor *are they* all children because they are the seed of Abraham; but, ‘In Isaac your seed shall be called.’” Here, we see that all followers of the Lord become the spiritual descendants of Abraham.

God also gave Abraham a wonderful promise. God said that He would also make a nation of Ishmael. He would do this because Ishmael was the son of Abraham. That promise gave Abraham peace. Genesis 21:14-16 goes on to say, “So Abraham rose early in the morning, and took bread and a skin of water; and putting *it* on her shoulder, he gave *it* and the boy to Hagar, and sent her away. Then she departed and wandered in the Wilderness of Beersheba. And the water in the skin was used up, and she placed the boy under one of the shrubs. Then she went and sat down across from *him* at a distance of about a bowshot; for she said to herself, ‘Let me not see the death of the boy.’ So she sat opposite *him*, and lifted her voice and wept.” Here, we see that Abraham was submissive to his wife and took action early the next morning. He gave Hagar bread and a skin of water and sent the two away.

Hagar did not know where to go, so she wandered in the Wilderness of Beersheba. That wilderness covers a large area south of the southern border of Canaan. It was part of the land that Abraham was promised would one day belong to his descendants in Genesis 15:18. That verse says, “On the same day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying: ‘To your descendants I have given this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the River Euphrates...’” Hagar and Ishmael were wandering without knowing where they were going. As a result, the water in the skin was quickly used in the hot wilderness. Ishmael soon became dehydrated because of the lack of water, and so, Hagar placed him under one of the shrubs in the desert.

Hagar did not want to watch her son die because she thought he would soon die from the lack of water. As a result, she moved from him about the distance of a bowshot (the distance that a man can shoot an arrow with a bow and arrow). However, she was filled with sorrow at the thought that he might soon die. As a result, she cried and mourned with a loud voice. At this point, Hagar was without hope. She did not know about the promise God had made to Abraham that a great nation would come from Ishmael. However, she was not alone there in the desert, as the Lord was there and knew exactly what was happening. God had said back in Genesis 17:19-20, “Then God said: ‘No, Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac; I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, *and* with his descendants after him. And as for Ishmael, I have heard you. Behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly. He shall beget twelve princes, and I will make him a great nation.’” In this promise, God had said a great nation would come from Ishmael. We saw earlier in this topic that God renewed this promise in verse 13, which says, “Yet I will also make a nation of the son of the bondwoman, because he *is* your seed.” God will always keep His promises.

Genesis 21:17-21 says, “And God heard the voice of the lad. Then the angel of God called to Hagar out of heaven, and said to her, ‘What ails you, Hagar? Fear not, for God has heard the voice of the lad where he *is*. Arise, lift up the lad and hold him with your hand, for I will make him a great nation.’ Then God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water. And she went and filled the skin with water, and gave the lad a drink. So God was with the lad; and he grew and dwelt in the wilderness, and became an archer. He dwelt in the Wilderness of Paran; and his mother took a wife for him from the land of Egypt.” God heard the voice of Ishmael as he lay under the bush suffering. Then, God called to Hagar out of heaven and asked her a question. That question was going to change the situation for both Ishmael and Hagar.

The angel of God just asked, “What ails you, Hagar?” God knew exactly what was bothering Hagar, but He asked this question to get her attention in her sorrow and crying. In Genesis 16:11, Christ told Hagar to call her son Ishmael. That verse says, “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.’” The name “Ishmael” means *God hears*. Now, we see that God gave Hagar a second reminder of the fact that He hears. The Lord told Hagar, “Fear not, for God has heard the voice of the lad where he is.” The fact that God hears all who cry out to Him is a promise to all who are filled with fear. The Lord will hear their cry.

Then, God gave Hagar the same promise that He had earlier given to Abraham. God just told Hagar, “Arise, lift up the lad and hold him with your hand, for I will make him a great nation.” Suddenly, the hopeless and fearful attitude was changed. God was speaking to her and telling her that her son was going to be greatly blessed and become a great nation. Usually, there is little or nothing to see in the wilderness. However, God opened the eyes of Hagar. Suddenly, she saw something that she had not seen at all. We read that she saw a well of water. Water was the need of Ishmael at that moment. God showed Hagar that there was a whole well of water so close that she could see it clearly when the Lord opened her eyes. As a result, she went to the well, filled the skin with water, and gave Ishmael all of the water that he needed to be fully revived and prepared for what would come in his future.

Then, we are told that God was with Ishmael just as He was with Hagar. Psalm 68:4-5 says, “Sing to God, sing praises to His name; extol Him who rides on the clouds, by His name YAH, and rejoice before Him. A father of the fatherless, a defender of widows, *is* God in His holy habitation.” Here, we see that God is the Father of the fatherless. Since Abraham had obeyed God and sent Hagar and Ishmael away, God became a father to him as he matured and became a man. During this time, he lived in the Wilderness of Paran. This is the area in the northeast section of the Sinai Peninsula. Israel camped in this area many days during the time of their travels from Egypt to the land of Canaan and the twelve spies were sent from this area to spy out the land of Canaan (Numbers 13:1-3). Later, Hagar took a wife for Ishmael from the land of Egypt. We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain that God has a great concern for those who have no physical father to help them in their growth to maturity. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to explain this important lesson.