

The Allegory of Abraham's Women

(01/19/17)

- I. **Gen 11:27-30**-Sarai is barren and has no child
 - A) Sarai ("my princess") later has her name changed by the Lord to Sarah ("noblewoman princess") which reflects her being married to a king or nobility
 - 1) **Gen 17:15-16**- This name change comes after Abram has been counted righteous and after his name has been changed.
 - 2) This name change is indicative of the fact that Sarah is to be "mother" of a new race of nobility by faith
 - i. It is interesting that the 10th ("law") Hebrew letter of the alphabet is replaced by the 5th ("grace")
 - B) The fact that Sarai is barren is a great bible truth, representing man's complete inability to produce the righteous fruit required by God and His righteousness
 - 1) This barren condition is a perfect picture of the total depravity of man, not shadowing that there is no good at all in any man, but that none can produce the fruit acceptable to God
 - 2) Note that Sarai, Rebekah and Rachael are all barren
 - i. Barren = "Unfruitful, unproductive, lacking power to produce, without required strength or potency, impotent"
 - C) **Tit 3:4-5**- The new birth or regeneration is solely and act of God Almighty and no effort on man's part to obtain it produces any fruit
 - 1) **Rom 5:6**- "When we were yet without strength"
 - 2) **Job 14:4**- "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?"
 - i. **Luke 18:27**- What is impossible for man is possible for God
 - ii. **Phil 4:13**- "I can do all things through Christ which stengtheneth me"
 - D) Abram = "Father of many"
 - 1) What a joke it must have been to so many to meet the "father of many" who had no children, kinda like we laugh at the fat guy called Skinny or the tall guy named Tiny
 - 2) Abram's name would have been a daily reminder of his inability and failure
- II. Timeline of events in Abram's quest for the promised child
 - A) **Gen 12:4-7**- God's 1st promise of a seed to Abram at age 75
 - B) **Gen 13:14-18**- God promises Abram his seed will be as dust of earth
 - C) **Gen 15:1-6**- God promises Abram that the seed will come from his own loins, not by adoption, and that his offspring will be as stars of heaven
 - 1) **Gen 15:6**- Abram believes God and is counted righteous

- D) **Gen 16:1-4**- It had been 10 years since the promise and Abram still had no seed
 - 1) So at age 85 he acts by his own power and brings forth fruit with Hagar
 - 2) **Gen 16:16**- Abram was 86 when Ishmael is born
- E) **Gen 17:1-5**- At age 99, after 13 years of silence from God, the Lord confirms the promise and changes Abram's name to Abraham
- F) **Gen 17:15-21**- God changes Sarai's name and promises Abraham that at the set time next year He will bring forth the promised seed
- G) **Gen 21:1-5**- God gives Abraham the promised seed Isaac when Abraham is 100 years old
 - 1) So it was 25 years from the 1st promise till the fulfillment

III. Consider the implications of this story

- A) Abram had never been able to produce the fruit of the covenant he had with Sarai, the freewoman
 - 1) However, Abram was perfectly able to produce the fruit of his work with Hagar, a bondwoman
 - 2) Thus Abram was virile to produce Ishmael (his own work and power) but completely impotent to produce Isaac (God's promise and power)
 - i. **Gal 4:21-31**-The whole story then becomes an allegory to show the nothingness of man's fleshly works and power, and the rejection by God of anything that is produced by it (Ishmael)
 - a) Hagar = Old Covenant and it's fruit Ishmael = Legalism/works
 - 1. Legalism (Sinai) only produces children for slavery and rejection of God
 - b) Sarah = New Covenant and it's fruit Isaac = Grace/promise
 - 1. Grace (New Jerusalem) produces children in liberty and acceptance of God
 - 2. **Gal 4:28**- We are the children (fruit) of the New Covenant which God produces through the new birth
 - ii. Ishmael = Salvation by merit through works, by baptism, or church attendance; attempted salvation involving man's effort and planning
 - iii. Isaac = Salvation by grace through faith, by the baptism of the Holy Spirit, by adoption into the Body of Christ; salvation by God alone through faith alone
 - iv. **Gal 4:30-31**- Ishmael is wholly cast out and superseded by Isaac
 - a) **2 Cor 3:6-13**- The Old Covenant is wholly cast out and superseded by the New Covenant
 - 1. **Gen 16:4-6**- Just as the 2 women could not dwell in harmony in the same house, Law cannot be mixed with grace
 - (a) **Rom 11:6**- Complete opposition of Law and Grace

(b) **Gen 21:9**- Ishmael mocking Isaac is a picture of the persecution of believers by the legalistic people and religions of this world (**Gal 4:29**)

(1) Imagine the possible heartbreak of Isaac due to the unprovoked mistreatment by his older brother

(c) **Rom 3:19-20**- Law can only break down, it never builds up

IV. When we say “God is able” it must be in the light of the acknowledgment that we are completely unable

A) Man must not simply be “divorced” from the idea he can perform righteousness apart from God, but he must completely “die” to the idea and be eternally separated (Ishmael) and be “born” from above (Isaac)

1) **Rom 7:1-14**- Dead to the Law so that we can bring forth fruit unto God

i. We must, as Abram did, see that our efforts (Ishmael) can only produce death and that **only God is able** to give life (Isaac) by the new birth

2) As long as I believe myself to be an heir (Isaac) according to any performance or merit of my own, then I am in fact an imposter heir (Ishmael)

i. **John 8:12-59**- This entire passage demonstrates the story of Ishmael and Isaac being played out in the picture of the Jewish nation

a) **Matt 3:9**- God is able to raise up children to Abraham from stones

b) **John 8:23**- Ye are from beneath (Ishmael) and I am from above (Isaac)

c) **John 8:28**- I do nothing (impotent) of myself

d) **John 8:34**- Legalistic people are in bondage to impotent self

e) **John 8:35**- Servant not in house forever, but the son is (**Gal 4:1-3**)

B) **Matt 19:26**- With God nothing is impossible (**Luke 1:37**)

1) **1 Chr 29:10-16**- What David had learned through his experiences

2) **2 Chr 25:8**- God hath power to help and to cast down

i. **Job 26:12**- “By His understanding He smiteth through the proud”

a) **Job 42:1-6**- The entire book of Job is about this exact subject, putting Ishmael (flesh/self) out in order that Isaac (Spirit/God) may reign in us

3) **Psa 62:7-12**- David speaks of man’s weight in God’s balances

C) **1 Cor 1:26-31**- God uses the weak and foolish things to the eyes of men, and they must be seen as weak, otherwise they are useless

1) **2 Cor 4:7**- Treasure in earthen vessels so God gets the glory/credit

2) **2 Cor 12:6-10**- God’s strength made perfect in man’s weakness

i. **Judges 7:1-3**- Gideon’s army of 30,000 reduced to 300

ii. **Judges 15:15**- God uses the jaw bone of an ass (think about the “foolishness of preaching”)

- iii. **Ex 4:2**- God uses a stick to perform plagues
 - iv. **1 Sam 17:40**- God takes down Goliath with a smooth stone
 - v. **1 Kings 17:12**- Supplies Elijah with a handful of flour and a little oil
 - vi. **1 Kings 18:44**- Waters land with a cloud small like a fist
 - vii. **John 16:9**- Feeds 5000 with a few small loaves from a young lad
 - a) **Psa 8:2**- Out of the mouth of babes thou hast ordained strength
 - b) **Matt 21:12-17**- Babes are believers
 - 1. **Matt 11:25**- Hidden things revealed to babes
 - c) **Mark 10:14**- Kingdom of God is of babes
 - 3) The Christian world is taught to grow stronger in Christ each day, when in fact we need to pray Christ grow stronger in us through our increasing weakness
 - i. This is exactly the snare the Galatians are falling into as they try to be perfected in the flesh by the Law
- V. **God is able** = In the allegory of Ishmael and Isaac we are to see that it is the one who is barren, without strength and unable to produce that can be used of God, and the one that is able and believes he has strength is actually the one that is impotent to God's purpose
- A) Thus each of us must "cast out the bondwoman (our performance/legalism) and her child (our fruit/works)"
- 1) **Rom 4:19**- "Now dead" at age 99
 - i. This could not be said of Abraham 13 yrs previous, and explains why God sent Hagar and the child back
 - a) **Rom 4:1**- Abram had been put to death and Abraham born (meaning Abraham had learned of his impotency to produce the promise of God
 - 1. **Gen 17**- This is pictured in the circumcision, which had to come prior to Isaac's conception
 - 2) **Gal 2:11-21**- This is what Paul describes, which he could say and Peter could not yet say
 - i. **Gal 2:19** "I am dead to the law"
 - a) 1st for salvation (past)
 - b) 2nd in fruition (present)
 - c) 3rd by fulfillment (future)
- VI. **Isa 5:20**- The types intended by God in the allegory have been reversed by man, presenting evil as good
- A) Isaac is not a type of the nation Israel, nor of a Jew by birth, but is a type of the new creature by the promise of the new birth
- 1) **Gal 4:28**- "We (believers of any race) are the children of promise"
- B) Ishmael is in fact the type of the Jew who by his birthright insists he is an heir

- 1) **Gen 25:16**- Ishmael even becomes “12 princes” (pseudo Israel)
- 2) **John 8:44-45**- Unbelieving “workers” are actually the children of the devil as they are the product (fruit) of his lie (“you can work righteousness”)
- C) **2 Cor 4:3-7**- Consider how through false systems of theology the devil has rendered these truths completely hidden to our own understanding, and only through the potency of God can any of the true meanings come through
 - 1) **Luke 11:5-13**- **God is able** to reveal His scriptures to us; ask!