

Abraham, Hagar, and Ishmael

Key Verse: *“Also of the son of the bondwoman will I make a nation, because he is thy seed.”*

—Genesis 21:13

Selected Scripture:
Genesis 21:9-21

AS WE HAVE STUDIED DURING our previous lesson, “Abram’s wife bare him no children.” (Gen. 16:1) For this reason, Sarai offered her Egyptian handmaiden Hagar to Abram, and she conceived. This angered Sarai, and she dealt so harshly with Hagar that she fled into the wilderness out of fear. (vss. 4-7) An angel of the LORD spoke to Hagar, and after telling her to return to her mistress assured her with these words, “I will multiply thy seed exceedingly, that it shall not be numbered for multitude.” (vs. 10) He would also tell her that she would bear a son, “and shalt call his name Ishmael; because the LORD hath heard thy affliction.” (vs. 11) Hagar appropriately means ‘flight,’ or ‘cast out.’ The name Ishmael means, ‘God shall hear.’

Hagar returned to the house of her mistress, and gave birth to her son Ishmael. After their return, Isaac would then be born at the appointed time that God had told him that Sarah would bare him a son. After the birth of Isaac, Abraham “made a great feast.” (Gen. 21:8) Sarah, seeing Hagar and Ishmael, “which she had born unto Abraham, mocking. Wherefore she said

unto Abraham, Cast out this bondwoman and her son: for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son.” (vss. 9,10) He did as his wife asked, but “the thing was very grievous in Abraham’s sight.” (vs. 11) Hagar again departed into the wilderness, this time taking her son Ishmael with her. She continued for awhile until she ran out of water, and put Ishmael under a bush believing that they both would soon die. Once again an angel of the LORD called to her, and told her, “Fear not; for God hath heard the voice of the lad where he is. Arise, lift up the lad, and hold him in thine hand; for I will make him a great nation.” (vss. 17,18) God showed her a well of water, and she gave water to her son, and he survived. “God was with the lad; and he grew, and dwelt in the wilderness, and became an archer.” (vs. 20) He would grow to manhood, marry, and continue to dwell in the land of Egypt, in the wilderness of Paran.

During this time, God assured Abraham that Isaac was the promised seed, but he would not forget Ishmael. God would bless him also ‘because he is thy seed.’ We can see how God would fulfill his vow when we look at what is included in his promise. The seed of the bondwoman represents the nation of Israel, and Hagar refers to the Law Covenant. The Apostle Paul explains, “Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a freewoman. But he who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh; but he of the freewoman was by promise.” (Gal. 4:22,23) He continues, “These are the two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage. . . . But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all.” (vss. 24,26) It also points out again that Ishmael, although brought forth first, should not be a joint-heir with Isaac, the son of promise. Sarah is the mother of the promised seed, Isaac, which represents Jesus the head, and the church his body. ■