

Hagar and Ishmael

Key Verses: “*God said unto Abraham, Let it not be grievous in thy sight because of the lad, and because of thy bondwoman; in all that Sarah hath said unto thee, hearken unto her voice; for in Isaac shall thy seed be called. And also of the son of the bondwoman will I make a nation, because he is thy seed.*”
—**Genesis 21:12,13**

Selected Scripture:
Genesis 21:8-20

TODAY’S LESSON CONCERNs a hopeful mother, a first-born son, and a rejection of that son’s favored position by Jehovah. This narrative transpired in the lives of Abraham and his wife Sarah—at first called Abram and Sarai. Hoping to fulfill God’s promise that Abraham would bear a son, and knowing she was barren, Sarah urged him to take her Egyptian handmaid, Hagar, and bare children through her. (Gen. 15:4; 16:1,2) Abraham agreed, but when Hagar conceived and despised her mistress, Sarah demanded the servant be turned over to her care. This resulted in Sarah’s mistreatment of Hagar. In due course, Hagar gave birth to her son by Abraham, who was named Ishmael.
—vss. 5-16

For years Ishmael was looked upon as the heir of Abraham, even after the birth of Isaac, the long-promised son of Abraham and Sarah. When Abraham held a great feast to celebrate Isaac’s being weaned, Ishmael mocked his half-brother. (Gen. 21:8-10) Angered, Sarah told Abraham to banish Ishmael and his mother from their presence. Abraham was

saddened at the prospect of having his first son sent away. To comfort him, God spoke the words of today's Key Verses, which state that Isaac was the seed of promise, but another nation would come from Ishmael. Hagar had previously been told that Ishmael would have descendants "too numerous to count," but also that "he will live in hostility toward all his brothers."—Gen. 16:10-12, *New International Version*

The Apostle Paul points out to us that these circumstances contained pictures of future events. He identifies Hagar and Ishmael saying, "For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by the slave woman and the other by the free woman. His son by the slave woman was born according to the flesh, but his son by the free woman was born as the result of a divine promise. These things are being taken figuratively: The women represent two covenants. One covenant is from Mount Sinai and bears children who are to be slaves: This is Hagar."—Gal. 4:22-24, *NIV*

It was not apparent at the time why Sarah was right to have Hagar and Ishmael sent into a foreign land. The Apostle Paul makes it clear these things were done to identify the true seed of promise—Christ and the church. "Now you, brothers and sisters, like Isaac, are children of promise. At that time the son born according to the flesh persecuted the son born by the power of the Spirit. It is the same now. But what does Scripture say? Get rid of the slave woman and her son, for the slave woman's son will never share in the inheritance with the free woman's son. Therefore, brothers and sisters, we are not children of the slave woman, but of the free woman."—vss. 28-31, *NIV*

Though not known at the time, Paul makes it clear that Ishmael represented fleshly Israel. Many of the shadows and pictures of the Old Testament are clarified in the New Testament. The apostle shows these things were hidden until the promised seed could be called through faith in Jesus Christ.—Gal. 3:15-29 ■