

# A Blessing for Ishmael and Isaac

**Key Verse:** “*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 21:12-14,17-21; 26:2-5,12,13

## **IN OUR LAST LESSON, WE**

learned that Sarah gave birth to a promised son, and that his name was Isaac. The name Isaac means “laughter.” This is due in part to the fact that both Abraham and Sarah laughed when they were told the news concerning the coming birth of a son in their advanced age. More importantly, however, it has reference to the laughter and joy that the world of mankind will have in fulfillment of the promise made by God to Abraham through the spiritual seed—Christ. These small details, such as the meaning of a name, serve to show us that God’s plan is being carried out, and that everything is ordered under his control even to the smallest detail.

Years prior to the birth of Isaac, and since Sarah had not been able to bear any children to Abraham, she encouraged him to have children through her handmaid Hagar. However, after hearing the news regarding the coming

birth of a child to Abraham by her maid, Sarah had a change of heart, and despised Hagar, who then fled. An angel of the Lord visited Hagar, and told her to return to Abraham and Sarah. (Gen. 16:1-9) The angel gave her this promise: "The angel of the LORD said unto her, I will multiply thy seed exceedingly, that it shall not be numbered for multitude." (vs. 10) Hagar was further told she would have a son, and that his name would be called Ishmael, "because the LORD hath heard thy affliction." (vs. 11) The name Ishmael means "whom God hears."

These events point to another important aspect of our lesson. Although Ishmael was not the promised seed and heir of the promises pertaining thereto, yet as a son of Abraham he was not forgotten. Genesis 17:18 states: "Abraham said unto God, O that Ishmael might live before thee!" God responded, telling him that Sarah would bear Isaac, "and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his seed after him." (vs. 19) "As for Ishmael, I have heard thee: Behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly; twelve princes shall he beget, and I will make him a great nation."—vs. 20; Gen. 25:12-16

We realize that these events were typical of greater things in the fulfillment of God's plan of salvation. In the type, Abraham gave all that he had to Isaac. (Gen. 25:5) However, he also made ample provision for Ishmael and for his other children which he had by his third wife, Keturah. (vss. 1-4) Isaac, the recipient of Abraham's inheritance and chief blessing, represents Christ and his bride. (Gal. 3:16,29) Ishmael typically represents natural Israel. (Gal. 4:25) In the antitype, God bestows all of his fullness upon Christ, the Messiah, and through him makes provision for blessing natural Israel, and also for blessing all the families of the earth, represented by the many children of Keturah. Thus, all are to be ultimately blessed by the antitypical Isaac. ■