

THE LORD – THE EVERLASTING GOD

GENESIS 21:22-34

INTRODUCTION

A. Genesis 21 opens with the *arrival of Isaac* in **vv. 1-7**, then the *removal of Ishmael* in **vv. 8-21**.

1. The birth-arrival of Isaac was a miraculous fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham and Sarah.

2. The removal of Hagar and Ishmael from the house of Abraham and Sarah was an *actual historical event* with a *practical spiritual explanation* in **Galatians 4:21-5:1**.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary sums up this point:

Ishmael was born by the flesh through “the slave woman”. Isaac was born by the promise and was the heir. One represented bondage at Sinai, the other freedom when the promise finally came. When Christ, the seed, came, the old was done away. Now that the promise has come, believers are co-heirs with the promised Seed by adoption through God's grace. To go back under the Law would be to undo the fulfillment of God's promise. Those adopted by the Seed become seeds and are set free from the bondage of the Law. Just as Ishmael and Isaac were in conflict, so the flesh and the Spirit do not harmonize. The flesh

struggles against the Spirit, often mocking it. Therefore believers are to “get rid of the slave woman and her son”, that is, to remove the threat of the flesh and “live by the Spirit”.¹

3. These lessons were too important for us to rush through, so we spent time in this story and didn’t complete our study of **Genesis 21**; so...

B. TONIGHT – We look at the rest of **Genesis 21**.

ABRAHAM THE SOJOURNER

Genesis 21:22-32

21:22-32²² At that time Abimelech and Phicol the commander of his army said to Abraham, “God is with you in all that you do. ²³ Now therefore swear to me here by God that you will not deal falsely with me or with my descendants or with my posterity, but as I have dealt kindly with you, so you will deal with me and with the land where you have sojourned.” ²⁴ And Abraham said, “I will swear.”

A. The CHARACTERS:

1. “Abraham”

If this story is chronologically set, then it has been at least 4 years since the event of Genesis 20, and Abraham is well over 100 years old in this story.

¹ Ross, Allen P. “Genesis.” *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*. Ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck. Vol. 1. Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985. 63. Print.

2. “Abimelech” – The title of the Philistine king of Gerar

Since “Abimelech” was a title, this person could have either been the same man in Genesis 20 or a different one.

3. “Phicol” – The military commander under Abimelech, the Philistine king.

B. The TREATY:

1. **Warren Wiersbe** observed, “The fact that he [Abimelech] wanted assurance of Abraham’s fidelity indicates that the patriarch’s deception [in Genesis 20] had led to a lack of trust on the part of his neighbors. They wanted assurance that Abraham would “play fair” with them because he was such a powerful man.” ²

2. Abimelech and Phicol could see that God was with Abraham, and this motivated them to make a treaty with him – “**God is with you in all that you do.**”

a. They could see that God caused Abraham to be successful and prosperous – AND God miraculously enabled Abraham and Sarah to have a child in their old age.

In **Genesis 24:35-36**, Abraham’s servant testified, “The LORD has greatly blessed my master, and he has become great. He has given him flocks and herds, silver and gold, male servants and female servants, camels and donkeys. And Sarah my master’s

² Wiersbe, Warren W. *Be Obedient*. Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1991. Print. “Be” Commentary Series.

wife bore a son to my master when she was old, and to him he has given all that he has.”

b. God was with Abraham, and He blessed him.

i. In **Genesis 12:2**, God promised Abraham, “I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing.”

ii. In **Genesis 15:1**, God assured Abraham, “Fear not, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great.”

iii. God was *with* Abraham – God was *blessing* Abraham – and Abraham’s neighbors could see this, and they recognized the advantage of dwelling in peace with him.

c. APPLICATION:

i. There are times when non-believers will recognize the advantage of being “at peace” with God’s people.

aa. They understand that their success and prosperity is linked to the special relationship Christians have with God.

bb. EXAMPLE – The LORD was with Joseph, so he succeeded in everything he did as he served in the home of his Egyptian master. Potiphar noticed this and realized that the LORD was with Joseph, giving him success in everything he did. This pleased Potiphar, so he soon made Joseph his personal attendant. He put him in charge of his entire household and

everything he owned. From the day Joseph was put in charge of his master's household and property, the LORD began to bless Potiphar's household for Joseph's sake. All his household affairs ran smoothly, and his crops and livestock flourished. So Potiphar gave Joseph complete administrative responsibility over everything he owned (**Genesis 39:2-6**, NLT).

cc. Do our *non-believing spouses* see the advantage of being married to us because of our faith and relationship with God?

dd. Do our *non-believing friends* see the advantage of being friends with us because of our faith and relationship with God?

ee. Do our *non-believing employers* see the advantage of us working for them because of our faith and relationship with God?

ii. May we showcase the *flourishing and fruitful life of Jesus* to the people around us – in the world.

21:25-32 ²⁵ When Abraham reproved Abimelech about a well of water that Abimelech's servants had seized, ²⁶ Abimelech said, "I do not know who has done this thing; you did not tell me, and I have not heard of it until today." ²⁷ So Abraham took sheep and oxen and gave them to Abimelech, and the two men made a covenant. ²⁸ Abraham set seven ewe lambs of the flock apart. ²⁹ And Abimelech said to Abraham, "What is the meaning of these seven ewe lambs that you have set apart?" ³⁰ He said, "These seven ewe lambs you will

take from my hand, that this may be a witness for me that I dug this well.”
³¹Therefore that place was called Beersheba, because there both of them
swore an oath. ³²So they made a covenant at Beersheba. Then Abimelech and
Phicol the commander of his army rose up and returned to the land of the
Philistines.

A. This treaty provides *safety and security* for Isaac.

B. This story leads into the moment on Mount Moriah – with Abraham
and Isaac – in **Genesis 22**.

ABRAHAM THE WORSHIPPER

Genesis 21:33-34

21:33-34 ³³Abraham planted a tamarisk tree in Beersheba and called there
on the name of the LORD, the Everlasting God. ³⁴And Abraham sojourned
many days in the land of the Philistines.

A. THEOLOGY – Abraham ... called there on the name of *the LORD, the
Everlasting God*.

1. Theology means, “The Study of God.”

a. The Bible is the primary and authoritative source for right
theology, and it should shape our belief and view of God.

b. ALSO – Every Christian is a theologian, and our belief and view
of God shapes how we respond to God and live for Him.

c. Knowing about God, and knowing Him, is the greatest and loftiest knowledge we could possess.

i. **C.H. Spurgeon** – It has been said by someone that “the proper study of mankind is man.” I will not oppose the idea, but I believe it is equally true that the proper study of God’s elect is God; the proper study of a Christian is the Godhead. The highest science, the loftiest speculation, the mightiest philosophy, which can ever engage the attention of a child of God, is the name, the nature, the person, the work, the doings, and the existence of the great God whom he calls his Father.

There is something exceedingly improving to the mind in a contemplation of the Divinity. It is a subject so vast, that all our thoughts are lost in its immensity; so deep, that our pride is drowned in its infinity. ...

But while the subject humbles the mind, it also expands it. ... The most excellent study for expanding the soul, is the science of Christ, and Him crucified, and the knowledge of the Godhead in the glorious Trinity. Nothing will so enlarge the intellect, nothing so magnify the whole soul of man, as a devout, earnest, continued investigation of the great subject of the Deity.

And, whilst humbling and expanding, this subject is eminently consolatory. Oh, there is, in contemplating Christ, a balm for every wound; in musing on the Father, there is a quietus for every grief; and in the influence of the Holy Ghost, there is a balsam for every sore. Would you lose your sorrow? Would you drown your cares? Then go, plunge yourself in the Godhead’s deepest sea; be lost in his immensity; and you shall come forth as from a couch of rest, refreshed and invigorated. I know nothing

which can so comfort the soul; so calm the swelling billows of sorrow and grief; so speak peace to the winds of trial, as a devout musing upon the subject of the Godhead. ³

ii. God said – “Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom, let not the mighty man boast in his might, let not the rich man boast in his riches, but let him who boasts boast in this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the LORD who practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth. For in these things I delight, declares the LORD” (**Jeremiah 9:23-24**).

2. Our God is *YHWH, the everlasting God* –

a. The Bible says,

i. Psalm 90:2 – Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world, **from everlasting to everlasting you are God.**

ii. Isaiah 40:28 – Have you not known? Have you not heard? The LORD is the **everlasting God**, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable.

b. This means:

- God is without beginning and end.
- God exists above time and never ages.

³ Packer, J. I. *Knowing God* (Knowing God Set) (p. 18-19). (Function). Kindle Edition.

- God pre-existed the created universe and everything in it, and He will exist beyond it.
- God is the always “always” – His name is “I AM”⁴

3. Speaking about the Everlasting God, the Bible teaches us –

a. FIRST – His rule and kingdom

i. Daniel 7:14, NLT – His rule is eternal—it will never end. His kingdom will never be destroyed.

ii. Psalm 145:13 – Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and your dominion endures throughout all generations.

b. NEXT – His ways and actions

i. God loves us with **an everlasting love.**

Jeremiah 31:3 – [Thus says the LORD] I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore I have continued my faithfulness to you.

ii. God holds us with **His everlasting arms.**

Deuteronomy 33:27 – The **eternal God** is your dwelling place, and underneath are the **everlasting arms.**

⁴ Exodus 3:14

iii. God fulfills His promises to us according to His everlasting faithfulness.

Psalm 117:2 – Great is his steadfast love toward us, and **the faithfulness of the LORD endures forever.** Praise the LORD!

iv. God grants everyone who believes in Jesus His **everlasting life.**

John 3:16, NKJV – For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have **everlasting life.**

B. DOXOLOXY – *Abraham planted a tamarisk tree in Beersheba and called there on the name of the LORD, the Everlasting God.*

1. Abraham *“planted a tamarisk tree”* as a visible marker of worship to the Everlasting God.

a. Abraham’s planting this tamarisk tree was significant.

i. Canaanite idol-worshippers made gods of wood and stone and then called upon them in wooded areas – “on the high places and on the hills and under every green tree.” ⁵

ii. ABRAHAM – Unlike the Canaanites, Abraham did not fashion a god from a tree; instead, he planted a tamarisk tree.

⁵ Deuteronomy 12:2; 2 Kings 16:4; 2 Chronicles 28:4; Jeremiah 2:20; Ezekiel 6:13; Hosea 4:13

aa. *Tamarisk trees* are slow-growing trees that can survive and thrive in harsh desert conditions. They provide shade and sustenance for those under it.

bb. Abraham did not worship a tree; instead, he planted one for God.

One pastor spoke of this scene as “Abraham giving God a floral bouquet of love and adoration.”

iii. ABRAHAM – Unlike the Canaanites, Abraham did not call upon a human-made god, such as Baal; instead –

- He called on the name of the God who created all things.
- He called on the name of the God who chose and called Abraham and his descendants to be His covenant people – through which the Messiah would come, and all the nations of the earth would be blessed.

iv. The significance of this scene:

aa. COVENANT – This planted tamarisk tree symbolizes God’s covenant with Abraham AND Abraham’s commitment to God.

bb. FUTURE GENERATIONS – Abraham’s descendants would enjoy the shade and substance of this tree – it was a place of blessing.

cc. FAITH – This planted tamarisk tree was a witness of God’s promise that Abraham’s descendants – Israel – would one day inherit Canaan and be planted in the land as a nation.

v. APPLICATION:

i. FIRST – Abraham’s building altars and planting a tamarisk tree for God in Canaan marked him as someone *being – believing – and behaving – something completely different* than the *pagan people* he was among, and the *pagan society and culture* he was living in. *HE WAS IN THE WORLD BUT NOT OF IT.*

aa. The same is true of WHO WE ARE, and the same should be true of HOW WE LIVE in this world.

aa-I. We are residents and sojourners on this earth but not citizens and slaves to this world – **the world** that is *ruled by Satan* and marked by *resistance and rebellion against God.*

aa-I-A. John 17:16 – They are not of the world, just as I [Jesus] am not of the world.

aa-I-B. Philippians 3:20 – our citizenship is in heaven...

aa-II. THEREFORE – Our conduct in this world should be distinct and different than the anti-God mold and movements of the world.

aa-II-A. Leviticus 10:10 – You are to distinguish between the holy and the common, and between the unclean and the clean...

aa-II-B. Romans 12:2, NLT – Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think.

aa-II-C. 1 John 2:15-17, NLT – Do not love this world nor the things it offers you, for when you love the world, you do not have the love of the Father in you. For the world offers only a craving for physical pleasure, a craving for everything we see, and pride in our achievements and possessions. These are not from the Father, but are from this world. And this world is fading away, along with everything that people crave. But anyone who does what pleases God will live forever.

bb. We must daily *decide and determine* the *kind of person we want to be* and the *kind of life we want to live* in this world.

bb-I. *Like Abimelech and Phicol*, non-believing people in the world are watching us.

- Do they see us resembling non-believers in the non-believing world – in our mind-set, world-view, and action and speech...
- OR – showcasing a life for God that is distinct and different than a world blinded in spiritual darkness and bound in spiritual death.
- Does our lives diffuse a different aroma and present a compelling reason for others to draw near to God, OR do we repel people away from Him – because we carry the same odor of the world they do?

bb-II. May the world see in us a redeemed, authentic people who worship the true God in a counter-cultural way – in “spirit and truth” (**John 4:23-24**).

ii. NEXT – When we worship God in “spirit and truth” in our home – within our household, we are planting a living, flourishing *marker with deep roots* AND establishing a *memorial* for our family – and for our future generations.

aa. EXAMPLE – Each of you must pick up one stone and carry it out on your shoulder—twelve stones in all, one for each of the twelve tribes of Israel. We will use these stones

to build a memorial. In the future your children will ask you, ‘What do these stones mean?’ Then you can tell them, ‘They remind us that the Jordan River stopped flowing when the Ark of the LORD’s Covenant went across.’ These stones will stand as a memorial among the people of Israel forever” (**Joshua 4:5-7**, NLT).

bb. Joshua 24:15 – As for me and my family, we will serve the LORD.

cc. Don’t give-up on planting tamarisk trees for the Lord in your home.

2. Abraham *“called there on the name of the LORD”* – This was his verbal *prayer and praise* to God.

a. We can call on the name of the LORD for *salvation*.

Romans 10:9-13, NLT – If you openly declare that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is by believing in your heart that you are made right with God, and it is by openly declaring your faith that you are saved. As the Scriptures tell us, “Anyone who trusts in him will never be disgraced.” Jew and Gentile are the same in this respect. They have the same Lord, who gives generously to all who call on him. For *“Everyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved.”*

b. We can call on the name of the LORD for *help*.

Lamentations 3:55-58, NLT – *I called on your name, LORD, from deep within the pit. You heard me when I cried, “Listen to my pleading! Hear my cry for help!” Yes, you came when I called; you told me, “Do not fear.” Lord, you have come to my defense; you have redeemed my life.*

c. We can call on the name of the LORD in *praise*.

i. Isaiah 12:3-5 – With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation. And you will say in that day: “Give thanks to the LORD, *call upon his name*, make known his deeds among the peoples, proclaim that his name is exalted. Sing praises to the LORD, for he has done gloriously; let this be made known in all the earth.”

ii. Hebrews 13:15 – Through him ... let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name.

d. APPLICATION:

i. Who are you calling on for *salvation, help, and praise*?

ii. The LORD – the everlasting God – is the one who hears and answers our call, and He alone is worthy of our prayer and praise.

A.W. Tozer – This day our hearts approve with gladness what our reason can never fully comprehend, even Thine

eternity, O Ancient of Days. Art Thou not from everlasting, O Lord, my God, mine Holy One?

We worship Thee, the Father Everlasting, whose years shall have no end; and Thee, the love-begotten Son whose goings forth have been ever of old; we also acknowledge and adore Thee, Eternal Spirit, who before the foundation of the world didst live and love in coequal glory with the Father and the Son.

Enlarge and purify the mansions of our souls that they may be fit habitations for Thy Spirit, who dost prefer before all temples the upright heart and pure.

Amen. ⁶

⁶ Tozer, A.W.. The Knowledge of the Holy (Function). Kindle Edition.