

## Genesis Chapter 21 - Commentary By Mike Wells

### Chapter 21 Overview:

In Chapter 21, we see the birth of Isaac as promised by God to Abraham and Sarah! We also see more trouble over Hagar. The chapter is divided into four sections: (1) The birth of Isaac in verses 1-8. (2) Conflict over Isaac by Ishmael and Hagar in verses in 9-13. (3) Hagar and Ishmael are cast out, yet helped by an angel in verses 14-21. (4) Abimelech's covenant with Abraham in verses 22-34.

**Genesis 21 : 1 - *And the LORD visited Sarah as he had said, and the LORD did unto Sarah as he had spoken.***

- God did what He said He was going to do.
- The simple lesson is that God always keeps His Word!
- He never backs away or reneges on what He says He is going to do.
- **Daniel 11:36 - *And the king shall do according to his will; and he shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak marvellous things against the God of gods, and shall prosper till the indignation be accomplished: for that that is determined shall be done.***

**Genesis 21 : 2-4 – *2 For Sarah conceived, and bare Abraham a son in his old age, at the set time of which God had spoken to him. 3 And Abraham called the name of his son that was born unto him, whom Sarah bare to him, Isaac. 4 And Abraham circumcised his son Isaac being eight days old, as God had commanded him.***

- As God had long promised, Sarah conceived her and Abraham had the promised son.
- Recall back in Genesis 17 : 21 that God had promised Abraham a son by Sarah in the next year.
- God had told him “*the set time*” in the next year it would happen.
- God not only did what He said He would do, but He did so at the exact time He said it would happen.
- As commanded in Genesis 17 : 19, Abraham named his son, Isaac.
- Abraham also had Isaac circumcised when he was eight days old as God had commanded. (Genesis 17 : 12. )

**Genesis 21 : 5 - *And Abraham was an hundred years old, when his son Isaac was born unto him.***

- Approximately twenty-five years had passed since God had first promised Abraham and Sarah a son.
- Abraham was now 100 years old and Sarah was 90.

**Genesis 21 : 6-7 – *6 God hath made me to laugh, so that all that hear will laugh with me. 7 Who would have said unto Abraham, that Sarah should have given children suck? for I have born him a son in his old age.***

- Though Sarah had doubted God in chapter 18, she now laughs with joy.
- She now gladly testified that God had done what He claimed He would do!!

**Genesis 21 : 8 - *And the child grew, and was weaned: and Abraham made a great feast the same day that Isaac was weaned.***

- When Isaac was weaned away from his mother's milk, Abraham celebrated with a Great Feast

**Genesis 21 : 9-10 – *9 And Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, which she had born unto Abraham, mocking. 10 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, even with Isaac.***

- During the feast of Isaac's weaning, Sarah noticed Ishmael, Hagar's son, mocking Isaac.
- Ishmael by now was at least fourteen years old.
- It may be, he mocked his little brother in that he was the first born and thus believed he would receive the lion's share of their father's inheritance.
- Momma Sarah went to her husband and demanded that "***he cast out this bondwoman and her son.***"
- The word translated as **bondwoman** (hama *awmah*) might also be rendered as 'maid servant.'
- Sarah continued, "***for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, even Isaac.***"
- Sarah's maternal instincts and jealousies were kicking in.
- No way would Ishmael share in the inheritance of her son Isaac if she had anything to say about it!

**Genesis 21 : 11 - *And the thing was very grievous in Abraham's sight because of his son.***

- Though not the son of promise, Ishmael nevertheless was still Abraham's son.
- He had watched him grow up for fourteen years.
- Now, under pressure from his wife, he had the task of evicting him and his mother from their home.
- Abraham's lack of faith in becoming involved with Hagar in the first place prompted trouble for years to come.
- The descendants of Ishmael to this day remain a thorn in the side of Israel.

**Genesis 21 : 12-13 – *13 And 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. 13 And also of the son of the bondwoman will I make a nation, because he is thy seed.***

- God spoke to Abraham and confirmed that he ought to listen to Sarah, "***for in Isaac shall thy seed be called.***"
- God still promised to make a nation of Ishmael as well "***because he is thy seed.***"
- Isaac is the son of promise, but Ishmael was still Abraham's son and therefore will also be blessed.

**Genesis 21 : 14-16 - *14 And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and took bread, and a bottle of water, and gave it unto Hagar, putting it on her shoulder, and the child, and sent her away: and she departed, and wandered in the wilderness of Beersheba. 15 And the water was spent in the bottle, and she cast the child under one of the shrubs. 16 And she went, and sat***

*her down over against him a good way off, as it were a bowshot: for she said, Let me not see the death of the child. And she sat over against him, and lift up her voice, and wept.*

- Early the next morning, Abraham sent Hagar and Ishmael away with bread and water.
- She wandered for some time in the wilderness of Beersheba.
- When the water was used up (and they evidently were dehydrated), she placed Ishmael under a shrub, and walked some distance from him (a bowshot).
- She sat down and said, “*Let me not see the death of the child. And she sat over against him, and lift up her voice and wept.*”
- Though she had been egged some of this on, she was still also a victim of Sarah’s and Abraham’s lack of faith.
- God knew that.
- There is no record that Abraham ever saw his son Ishmael again.

**Genesis 21 : 17-19** – *17 And God heard the voice of the lad; and the angel of God called to Hagar out of heaven, and said unto her, What aileth thee, Hagar? fear not; for God hath heard the voice of the lad where he is. 18 Arise, lift up the lad, and hold him in thine hand; for I will make him a great nation. 19 And God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water; and she went, and filled the bottle with water, and gave the lad drink.*

- God heard Hagar’s cry and sent an angel to comfort her.
- He promised her that He would make from her son, Ishmael, a great nation.
- Much of the Arabic peoples to this day trace their lineage to Ishmael.
- “*God therefore opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water.*”
- God delivered Ishmael and his mother.

**Genesis 21 : 20-21** - *20 And God was with the lad; and he grew, and dwelt in the wilderness, and became an archer. 21 And he dwelt in the wilderness of Paran: and his mother took him a wife out of the land of Egypt.*

- It is noteworthy that “*God was with the lad Ishmael.*”
- Though he would not inherit the promise God had made to Isaac, God nevertheless blessed Ishmael and helped him.
- As he grew into adulthood, he became an expert archer, living in the wilderness of Paran which borders Palestine and the Sinai region.
- Later, Hagar found him a wife from Egypt.

**Genesis 21 : 22-24** - *22 And it came to pass at that time, that Abimelech and Phichol the chief captain of his host spake unto Abraham, saying, God is with thee in all that thou doest: 23 Now therefore swear unto me here by God that thou wilt not deal falsely with me, nor with my son, nor with my son’s son: but according to the kindness that I have done unto thee, thou shalt do unto me, and to the land wherein thou hast sojourned. 24 And Abraham said, I will swear.*

- Meanwhile, Abraham and Abimelech had repaired their differences.
- Evidently, Isaac had been born while Abraham dwelt in the region of Gerar.
- Abimelech came to Abraham and expressed that they had observed that “*God is with thee in all that thou doest.*”

- Not only had the fear of God been placed in their hearts in their contact with Abraham, they had also witnessed God’s blessing upon him.
- They therefore proposed to Abraham to make a covenant together.
- They proposed that they both would deal honorably with each other, including their descendants.
- Abraham agreed.

***Genesis 21 : 25-31 - 25 And Abraham reproved Abimelech because of a well of water, which Abimelech’s servants had violently taken away. 26 And Abimelech said, I wot not who hath done this thing: neither didst thou tell me, neither yet heard I of it, but to day. 27 And Abraham took sheep and oxen, and gave them unto Abimelech; and both of them made a covenant. 28 And Abraham set seven ewe lambs of the flock by themselves. 29 And Abimelech said unto Abraham, What mean these seven ewe lambs which thou hast set by them- selves? 30 And he said, For these seven ewe lambs shalt thou take of my hand, that they may be a witness unto me, that I have digged this well. 31 Wherefore he called that place Beersheba; because there they swore both of them.***

- Before Abraham would ‘sign-off’ on the covenant, he brought to Abimelech’s attention that some of his servants had violently taken a well away from his servants.
- Wells were of big value in that semi-arid region.
- Abimelech pled that he knew nothing about the incident.
- Abraham therefore gave sheep and oxen to Abimelech to seal the covenant between them.
- In addition, Abraham set forth “*seven ewe lambs of the flock by themselves.*”
- When asked why by Abimelech, Abraham replied that they were a witness before all that he had dug the disputed well.
- Abimelech took the lambs and thus removed any dispute that the well belonged to Abraham.
- Of interest is that they named the place Beersheba.
- The Hebrew word ‘**beer**’ means ‘**well.**’ The word **sheba** means ‘**seven.**’
- So, Beersheba literally means ‘*the well of seven*’
- To this day, there remains a place named Beersheba in southern Israel.

***Genesis 21 : 32-34 - 32 Thus they made a covenant at Beersheba: then Abimelech rose up, and Phichol the chief captain of his host, and they returned into the land of the Philistines. 33 And Abraham planted a grove in Beersheba, and called there on the name of the LORD, the everlasting God. 34 And Abraham sojourned in the Philistines’ land many days.***

- After agreeing to the covenant between them, Abimelech and his party returned into the land of the Philistines.
- This is the first mention of the Philistines in the Bible.
- It is essentially the same term as the modern name, Palestinian.
- It is noteworthy in verse 34 that Abraham sojourned in the Philistines’ land many days.
- While there, he “*planted a grove in Beersheba, and called there on the name of the LORD, the everlasting God.*”
- Groves later would be banned by God in the law of Moses because they became the location of idolatry, but Abraham used it as a place to worship.