

To  
Have to  
Die

## Genesis 16:6 – 17:7



~ Our last report from our Spiritual Safari brought us the tragic result of a very disturbing failure on the part of both Sarah and Abraham with the birth of Ishmael to Hagar. This is certainly a huge let-down after the wonder and beauty of chapter fifteen. Remember, Abraham and this little Egyptian maid having a child would have been perfectly acceptable under the laws of society in that day; and the moral implications that should be read into this today are not readily apparent in the historical record. That is not to say God approved of this sin, because He doesn't. That will be made evident throughout Scripture; but Abraham and Sarah had both been brought up in Ur where this was common practice. What they did wrong seemed so natural to them. The moral angle is not what we're looking for, though, although what happened is terrible. The problem here is simply that they didn't believe God! Interestingly, the opposite is true today. Today, we would say what they did was a sin, but we would also disregard that they didn't believe God. Now, when Ishmael was born, his mother suddenly looked down upon Sarah. The maid's son was now set to inherit the family fortune! Sarah realizes just a bit too late where she went so horribly wrong. That's the formula for all Christian Tragedies today, too, by the way; and we have a whole lot of them in the church....

## XVI

***6 But Abram said unto Sarai, Behold, thy maid is in thy hand; do to her as it pleaseth thee. And when Sarai dealt hardly with her, she fled from her face.***

~ If Hagar had stuck around it would have meant certain death for her at the hand of Sarah. The child was definitely going to have to die, either way. So, the Angel of the Lord now appears for the very first time in the Bible –

to Hagar! When we see the Angel of the Lord in each of the thirty-nine books of the Old Testament we see none other than the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, friends. If you want to argue that point you'll have to find someone else to argue it with; because your safari ends here – or maybe you already stopped reading? Who knows? Most interestingly, every time we see Christ in the Old Testament He will be out looking for the lost! That is a tremendous revelation; at least, for me it is. Later, when we get to the fourth chapter of Galatians, Paul uses this as an allegory as he speaks of Hagar and the child representing Mount Sinai and the legality and bondage of it. Paul speaks of Sarah as the one who is free; but the one that really belonged to Abraham WAS Sarah! She was his wife, of course....

***7 And the angel of the LORD found her by a fountain of water in the wilderness, by the fountain in the way to Shur.***

***8 And he said, Hagar, Sarai's maid, whence camest thou? And whither wilt thou go? And she said, I flee from the face of my mistress Sarai.***

***9 And the angel of the LORD said unto her, Return to thy mistress, and submit thyself under her hands.***

***10 And the angel of the LORD said unto her, I will multiply thy seed exceedingly, that it shall not be numbered for multitude.***

~ Many people today want to approach God in a manner that is contrary to His explicit instructions given in Scripture; and they always place themselves back under the Mosaic System of Levitical Law when they do. They will never admit it, but that's when they begin worshipping the Torah in an utterly pious and self-righteous and self-serving something that is vain, dead, and empty – worshipping the creation rather than the Creator. We, the church, however, have been joined to - espoused to - Christ as a chaste virgin. We belong to Him! Of course, the true and genuine church will someday become the bride of Christ. Today, we shouldn't want to try to get back under law for a number of reasons: primarily because we know we cannot keep it, but also because we just don't need the trouble it brings in the lives of those who do that. Now, this incident and its results aren't just

a sorrow only to Sarah, they're going to be an even greater sorrow to Abraham later on....

***11 And the angel of the LORD said unto her, Behold, thou art with child, and shalt bear a son, and shalt call his name Ishmael; because the LORD hath heard thy affliction.***

***12 But he will be a wild man; his hand will be against every man, and every man's hand against him; and he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren.***

~ This is a good opportunity to make another wildly unpopular safari statement: look what is happening in the Middle East today. Ishmael was a wild man THEN - and he IS a wild man now! That's never changed; it has been the heritage of the Bedouins down through the centuries. It's also a literal fulfillment of prophecy. The Arab's are all offspring of Ishmael. The Islamist will say to the Christian, "....we are both sons of Abraham!" – and that is very true – but only in regard to the way Moses presents it here! They go back to Abraham through Ishmael – Christians go back through Isaac. Isaac is the promise. Ishmael is the product of disobedience and the result of doing things in their own way and in their own time. That's never going to work for the genuine child of God; and if this episode hadn't happened – Israel wouldn't have the problems they have today with the Arab's who abjectly hate and despise them. Make some notes, friends....

***13 And she called the name of the LORD that spake unto her, Thou God seest me: for she said, Have I also here looked after him that seeth me?***

~ Notice how God deals so incredibly graciously with Hagar. What happened wasn't her fault, my beloved! See, the natural man always forms an ideological misconception of God. When man makes a god it's always an ugly, scary and grotesque fabrication of misplaced and misguided thoughts. The True and Living God is One of Love and Holiness and Goodness and Mercy and Justice and Truth and Wisdom and Righteousness. I think Hagar was overwhelmed here by the Angel of the Lord, that is: by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself! Now, friends, I already know that none of this safari stuff seems very impressive to Christian's today because we think we have found

a higher view of God than Hagar had; but the reality is: we come JUST as far short of knowing God as she did – or maybe even shorter - because Hagar still likely knew more about Christ Jesus than anyone today does. In fact, I am sure of it.

See, it's difficult for finite man to conceive of the infinite God. We all come woefully short of understanding and knowing Him. Throw in a total and complete ignorance of the Word of God and those people simply have no inkling of a clue Who He really is, where He is, what He is doing today or how He does it. That's why the Word of God is worthy of man's study; and that's why this so-called Spiritual Safari bears down on that point until the pencil lead might break! A proper, correct and complete understanding of Holy Writ will dignify a man - and that ALONE signifies one's position in Christ throughout eternity. Again, seriously, you should really be making some notes here....

***14 Wherefore the well was called Beerlahairoi; behold, it is between Kadesh and Bered.***

***15 And Hagar bare Abram a son: and Abram called his son's name, which Hagar bare, Ishmael.***

***16 And Abram was fourscore and six years old, when Hagar bare Ishmael to Abram.***

## **XVII**

~ This chapter is one of the most outstanding chapters in the entire Word of God. Let's remember, God tested Abraham at every turn of his life. God appeared to Abraham seven times; even when Abraham stumbled greatly with some very definite failures – but there were also successes. Every single appearance of God was accompanied by a test of Abraham. Seven tests; seven appearances of God. First, God tested Abraham by calling him out of Ur in a very specific way. Abraham responded - but he only partially obeyed. His faith was still a little weak and imperfect at that time but at least he moved out in faith. Abraham then arrived in Canaan and the Lord blessed him there. Second, the Lord tested Abraham with the famine that

came to the land of Canaan. Abraham fled from Canaan to Egypt where he acquired riches and a maid. God had told Abraham to do neither of those things; and both became a severe stumbling block. The third test was in the form of those riches he acquired in Egypt - and this was the true test. Riches are always a determining test of faith; and they are the one stumbling block and high hurdle that most men simply cannot get over. Candidly, I have always wanted that kind of test but, so far, God hasn't tested me that way. I am sure He couldn't trust me with them; but I digress, sort of.

Well, Abraham was a generous and magnanimous man - and he didn't forget God. Remember, he went out and risked his life for his nephew, Lot; but it separated them. We also saw Abraham given tremendous power by the defeat of the kings of the east. That was another true test, too, by the way. Abraham established himself as a conqueror in that battle. Remember also, that Melchizedek met Abraham after the victory, and they celebrated the Lords Supper together. That communion would strengthen Abraham for the remaining tests that were to come; and that strength also gave him the resolve to refuse the spoils of war. Because Abraham depended on the strength of god for the victory God appeared and encouraged him yet again! The fifth test was the test of the promise of a son; and Abraham has failed miserably – mainly because he became impatient. Sarah encouraged Abraham to take matters into his own hands – which he did – thereby moving outside of the will of God. Tests numbers six and seven we have not yet seen. Six will concern the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. Of course, Lot will be involved in Abraham's life of testing - again. Then, lastly, the final test – number seven - will complete the tests with the sacrifice of Isaac. See, friends, we simply MUST have a proper and correct picture of Abraham to understand him.

Alright, God now changes this mans name to Abraham from Abram. God also confirms his promise to Abraham about a son. The Lord makes it clear to Abraham that Ishmael was not the one He had promised. This understanding is, in one sense, the key to this entire book. Blessed be those that understand here. This may, quite possibly, be the key to the entire Bible. God's covenant to Abraham concerns a seed and a land. Interestingly, we also have a new name for God given to us now. So, since

everyone now has a new name, here is the mathematical formula for them: Abraham / High Father + Abram / Father of a Multitude = Ishmael is NOT the promise of a son that God promised to Abraham. I am guessing that you dear readers would never have guessed that answer! Either way, the answer to another math equation that is totally unexpected is that we also now see Ishmael already turning thirteen – when he was just born a few verses ago....

***1 And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the (El Shaddai) Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect.***

***2 And I will make my covenant between me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly.***

~ Guess how many times we have the covenant mentioned in this chapter? Answer: thirteen; and this is Gods fifth appearance to Abraham. God re-affirms the promise that He has made - which absolutely rules out Ishmael - and the Lord makes a covenant. God adds another promise contingent upon prior promises. Does this all seem confusing and complicated and out of control to you? Well, I'm sure it did to Abraham. Paul said, "...and being not weak in faith, Abraham considered not his own body now dead, when he was about a hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sara's womb" – Romans chapter four verse nineteen. Well, friends, Sarah's womb represents a TOMB. It was a place of death now! Out of death came life. Paul concludes chapter four of Romans by saying, "...Christ was delivered for our offences and was raised again for our justification." Life out of death was the promise God made to Abraham when Abraham was ninety-nine years old, which means Sarah was eighty-nine years old - but Isaac won't come along for another year....

***3 And Abram fell on his face: and God talked with him, saying,***

***4 As for me, behold, my covenant is with thee, and thou shalt be a father of many nations.***

~ Abraham has the most children by far on the face of the earth today. We are also called children of God through faith in Christ Jesus! These children of Abraham are also children of his by faith; the children of Israel AND the Arabs, all who accept Christ as their Savior! That's billions of people from throughout the ages! God said this four thousand years ago and He has made good in His promise today. That, by de facto, makes this His notice to you – right now – this way, “.... but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all” – Romans chapter four verse sixteen....

***5 Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; for a father of many nations have I made thee.***

~ Suppose one morning Abraham woke up with Sarah and looked out of the tent. Out there on the fringe of their oasis they see a group of traders from Egypt on the horizon of the plains coming towards them with some goods. Abraham goes out to meet them on the plains – very professional and courteous. They ask Abraham if they can water their camels, and he says yes. So, these men thank Abraham and introduce themselves. One man introduces himself as Allah. The other is named Mohammed; but when Abraham gives his name, Allah says, “....oh, Abraham, high father! – Do you have a boy or girl?” To which old man Abraham replies, “....well, I don't have any children yet.” Allah says in disbelief, “....you mean to tell me that you don't have any children, but you have a name of “high father?” Abraham replies, “yes, that's right.” Well, these men immediately pack up and ride off on the desert laughing their heads off.

Then, about six months later, here they come back the other way – going home to Egypt - and they figure: let's give Abraham a visit and water the camels. So, Abraham goes out to meet them again; and Allah says, “....hello, high father!” with a giggle. Abraham says, “....my name's not 'high father' anymore.” So, Allah says, “....oh, then what is your name now?” Abraham answers, “....my name is now father of a multitude.” So, Allah says, “....my, you must have had twins!” But Abraham says, “....no, I still don't have any children!” Well, friends, these guys are not laughing anymore, they are writing Abraham off as having lost his mind. Here we have a man whom God called a father before he had any children; Abraham

- by faith - the father of a multitude. God has made good in His promise in this report. An everlasting covenant; an everlasting love. An eternal God. It's all right here in our Spiritual Safari....

***6 And I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee.***

***7 And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee ~***

