

### Isaac, the Promised Son, is Born

#### Genesis 21:1-7

Genesis 21:1-7 - *"And the LORD visited Sarah as He had said, and the LORD did for Sarah as He had spoken. <sup>2</sup> For Sarah conceived and bore Abraham a son in his old age, at the set time of which God had spoken to him. <sup>3</sup> And Abraham called the name of his son who was born to him—whom Sarah bore to him—Isaac. <sup>4</sup> Then Abraham circumcised his son Isaac when he was eight days old, as God had commanded him. <sup>5</sup> Now Abraham was one hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him. <sup>6</sup> And Sarah said, "God has made me laugh, and all who hear will laugh with me." <sup>7</sup> She also said, "Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? For I have borne him a son in his old age."*

#### Background Notes

In Genesis 12 God promised Abraham a line of descendants that would become a great nation. Abraham was seventy-five years old, and Sarah was sixty-five years old at that time, and they had no children. For the next twenty-five years, God continued to confirm his promise to Abraham and Sarah, but during that delay both Abraham and Sarah questioned God's promise - and they even tried to help God out. First they thought Abraham's servant Eliezer would be his heir (Genesis 15). Then they tried to help God out by Abraham using Hagar as a concubine to produce an heir (Genesis 16). God was not impressed with these lack-of-faith efforts, and He had to remind Abraham and Sarah several times that the promise would not be fulfilled by their contrived efforts, but with their very own child. Genesis 17:19 - *Then God said: "No, Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac."*

In chapter 21 that great promise was fulfilled. The promised son was finally born, and they named him Isaac. Abraham was one hundred years old when Isaac was born (v5). That means that Sarah was ninety years old. They had waited twenty-five years, but God had fulfilled his promise. Although Isaac was conceived in the natural way, God obviously had done a miracle. Sarah's body was not only rejuvenated to the point where she could bear a child at ninety years old, but she was also enabled to nurse the child. *"She also said, "Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? For I have borne him a son in his old age" (v7)*

#### Doctrinal Points

##### 1. God fulfills His perfect word in His time.

*"And the LORD visited Sarah as He had said, and the LORD did for Sarah as He had spoken. <sup>2</sup> For Sarah conceived and bore Abraham a son in his old age, at the set time of which God had spoken to him" (v1-2).*

God fulfills His perfect word in **His** time! God had promised a son, and God delivered a son. What God promises, God delivers! But why did God wait so long - twenty-five years? The answer is that God *didn't* wait! The promised son was born at **God's** set time (v2) - the time that God had planned all along.

Abraham and Sarah had to wait, and God allowed them to wait, but God had His reasons. We don't know why God had Abraham and Sarah wait so long for the promised child, but there were some lessons to be learned - learning to trust God, and learning to patiently wait on God. And God allowed them to wait so we could learn lessons from their lives. God fulfills His perfect word in **His** time. From our perspective it may look like God is behind schedule in fulfilling His promises, but God is never behind schedule. Christians have asked me, "Why did God choose to wait so long before sending Jesus Christ to die for the sins of the world?" The answer is that the Lord Jesus Christ came to earth **right on schedule**, in God's perfect time.

Galatians 4:4 says, "*when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son...*" The idea in "*fullness of time*" is the "right time," or the "*perfect time*." When the time was right and full and ready, and when the time for the predicted coming Messiah was perfect from God's view, the promises were fulfilled - **right on schedule**. Satan's attempts to thwart God's program were to no avail. God fulfilled His perfect will in His time.

This is true in reference to God's plans and programs for our lives too. God's plans are perfect, and they will be carried out on God's timetable. This even includes God's plans for training and discipline in our lives. In God's plans and programs, that discipline will take place in God's perfect way in God's perfect time. Nothing can mess up or thwart God's sovereign plans for the life of each believer.

All God's decrees are perfect, including His decrees about our lives as believers. What God has spoken is perfect, and it will be fulfilled in His time - whether it's the child for Abraham and Sarah, or when and where and how the Lord Jesus came into the world, or all the details in God's plans and programs for our lives.

I'm sure you've heard the expression, "God's delays are not denials." The Bible also teaches that His delays are His decrees. It's all part of His plan and His perfect timing. Think of His perfect decrees for the believer in Philippians 1:6: "*being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ..*" God fulfills His perfect word in His time.

## **2. God sees our imperfect faith in His grace.**

Hebrews 11:11 says, "*By faith Sarah herself also received strength to conceive seed, and she bore a child when she was past the age, because she judged Him faithful who had promised.*" "But wait a minute," you say! "I thought that Sarah **doubted** God's promise? I thought she laughed in unbelief when God said she would have a child in her old age." Yes, that's true! So how Hebrews 11:11 say, "*By faith Sarah herself also received strength to conceive seed, and she bore a child when she was past the age, because she judged Him faithful who had promised.*"

Is this a contradiction in the Bible? No! The answer is that Sarah changed. Her weak and imperfect faith matured, as we see in Genesis 21. Yes, Sarah did laugh in doubt about God's promise, but she did not deny God. She had a weak faith, but it was a genuine faith in the true God. It was an immature faith - an imperfect faith. But in His grace, God not only tolerated that imperfect faith, He patiently strengthened and matured Sarah's faith. In fact her faith matured to the point where God Himself inspired the writer to the Hebrews to say "**by faith** Sarah conceived and bore a son."

That's very encouraging, isn't it? Our gracious God sees and acknowledges our imperfect faith. Last week I had the privilege of seeing a man in his seventies put his trust in Jesus. He had a lot of doubts and questions, but he trusted Jesus Christ as his Savior with a step of genuine faith. That doesn't mean that all his questions and doubts were instantly answered or cleared up when he believed. At this point his faith is young. It's immature and imperfect - but it is genuine, and it will mature. And that's the point! His faith is in the true God and only Savior, Jesus Christ.

Sarah's faith was imperfect - but it was genuine. In His grace, God recognized that faith and He patiently strengthened it. How encouraging! God sees our imperfect faith in His grace.

## Practical Applications

### 1. Remember - "your strength will equal your days."

"Your strength will equal your days" **is** a quote from Deuteronomy 33:25. That promise was made to the tribe of Asher, but it can certainly be applied to us as well. What does it mean? It means that the Lord will give you whatever strength is necessary to do whatever He calls you to do.

That promise is illustrated in the life of Sarah. The Lord called Sarah to be a mother of a child when she was ninety years old, and the Lord gave her the bodily strength and stamina to carry out His will. The Lord will do the same for you. He probably won't call you to have a child at ninety years old, ladies, but He has promised to give you the strength to do whatever He calls you to do!

Providing needed strength is one way the Lord can guide us - to show us whether we're doing His will or not. Is He giving us the needed strength? There should not be burn out. Whatever the Lord calls you to do, the Lord will give you the strength to do it. Remember - your strength will equal your days.

### 2. Let's laugh with God!

In Genesis 17:17 Abraham laughed when God told him that Sarah would have a son. Abraham didn't exactly laugh **at** God – his laugh was may have been a "this is too good to be true" type of laugh. But Genesis 18:12 reveals that Sarah laughed in disbelief. In that sense, she laughed **at** God, and she had to be rebuked for her unbelieving laughter.

But in Genesis 21 Sarah laughed **with** God! *“And Sarah said, “God has made me laugh, and all who hear will laugh with me” (v6).* This was the laughter of joy! This was **laughing with God!** God named the child Isaac, meaning “laughter,” and He did it on purpose! The name Isaac was to be a reminder to Abraham and Sarah that they had laughed - and Sarah had laughed in unbelief. But with the birth of their son, the laughter was changed to the laughter of joy. God had fulfilled His promise!

Laughter can be wrongly directed at God in scornful unbelief, as we see so often today in the media, in the classroom, in the office, in the people with whom we rub shoulders daily. This mocking laughter is directed at God.

But Abraham and Sarah could laugh **with** God! They shared joyful laughter **with** God - and so can we! God has designed us to be joyful and to laugh - and we can laugh with Him. He has fulfilled His promise of a Savior for us, and we have so much for which to be joyful! *“My heart rejoices in your salvation. I will sing to the Lord, for He has been good to me.” (Psalm 13:5-6).*

When we think of all that the Lord has done for us, let's laugh for joy - with God!