



GENESIS 21-24 ISAAC BORN; ABRAHAM TESTED; REBEKAH AS THE BRIDE

After the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah Abraham dwelt with the Philistines in Gerar, near the coast. It was here that God miraculously healed Sarah and she was able to bear a son, Isaac.

“And the Lord visited Sarah as He had said...for Sarah conceived and bore Abraham a son in his old age, at the set time of which God had spoken to him” (Genesis 21:1-2). We are going to see there are many parallels between Abraham and Isaac on the one hand, and God and Jesus Christ.

(1). The first parallel is *the announcement* of the births of sons that seemed impossible to both Sarah and Mary. Sarah silently laughed when she heard she was going to have a child, and at first, Mary was incredulous of the announcement, but afterwards, both did believe in God.

(2). Secondly, we have *the miraculous birth* from women that seemed physically unable to have a child. Sarah was barren and old, while Mary was a virgin, yet both had the promised male child.

(3). The third parallel is that both males *came at God's set time*. God had promised a coming son to Abraham way back in Ur, twenty-five years before (Gen. 12:2-3). And Jesus arrived “when the fullness of the time had come” (Gal. 4:4). In both cases, everything had been carefully planned by God.

The Bible continues, “And Abraham called the name of his son...Isaac. Then Abraham circumcised his son Isaac when he was eight days old, as God had commanded him...And Sarah said, “God has made me laugh, and all who hear will laugh with me” (21:6).

(4). The fourth parallel is both Isaac and Jesus *were named beforehand by God*; Isaac, means “laughter” and would cause people to laugh when they heard of his father's and mother's ages, recognizing God in His power did this mighty miracle. Jesus' name means “Savior” and people would always know what His mission would be.

Then, Isaac is “weaned,” which means he no longer is nursed by his mother and can get along on his own--around the age of three. “And Abraham made a great feast on the same day that Isaac was weaned. And Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had borne to Abraham, scoffing [Gal. 4:29 mentions Ishmael persecuted

Isaac, so it must have been a long-standing jealousy and enmity]. Then she said to Abraham, ‘Cast out this bondwoman and her son; for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son...And the matter was very displeasing in Abraham's sight because of his son [for he loved Ishmael]. But God said to Abraham, ‘Do not let it be displeasing in your sight because of the lad or because of your bondwoman. Whatever Sarah has said to you, listen to her voice; for in Isaac your seed shall be called. Yet I will also make a nation of the son of the bondwoman, because he is your seed’” (21:8-13).

(5). So the fifth parallel is between Isaac and Ishmael, *Isaac being a type of Christ*, and *Ishmael, the son of the bondwoman, a type of someone under the condemnation of the law*. Paul explains, “Tell me, you who desire to be *under the law* [notice in Gal. 3:21-23 being *under the law* means being *under the condemnation of the law*], do you not hear the law? For it is written that Abraham had two sons; the one by a bondwoman, the other by a freewoman. But he who was of the bondwoman was born according to the flesh [no miracle needed here], and he of the freewoman through promise [by a miracle], which things are symbolic. For these are the two covenants: the one from Mount Sinai, which gives birth to *bondage* [bondage under the condemnation of the law because of sin], which is Hagar—for this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and corresponds to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children [the Jews are still under the condemnation of the law (Rom. 3:9, 19)—but the Jerusalem above is free [free from the condemnation of the law (Rom. 8:1-4), which is the mother of us all” (Galatians 4:21-26).

Paul is contrasting the two covenants, one that condemned one to death under the law, and the other, that gives freedom and forgiveness from the condemnation of the law through Jesus Christ. The Old Covenant was being administrated from Jerusalem by the Sanhedrin through men that did not have God's Spirit, were “under the law” and did not have a way of truly justifying the sinner but only had a symbolic reminder of it through animal sacrifices. In contrast, the New Covenant is being administrated by Jesus Christ from heaven above, with a far superior priesthood of Melchisedek, and

true justification for our sins through Christ's sacrifice, and have access to the Holy Spirit. So, are we sons of Ishmael, still under the penalty of the law as administered by the Jews today, or are we sons of Isaac and members of the true Christianity, administered by Jesus above? The answer, of course, is we are of the New Covenant administered by Jesus Christ, and every year at Passover, we remember this fact. By the way, God's Ten Commandments *are part* of the two covenants, but the former is administered only in the "letter" while the latter includes the "letter" and the "spirit" of the law, as Christ taught in Matthew 5-7.

The account continues with the expulsion from the camp of Hagar and young Ishmael, who is now a teenager. God again had to intervene so they do not die, and provides them with water. "So God was with the lad; and he grew and dwelt in the wilderness, and became an archer. He dwelt in the Wilderness of Paran and his mother took wife for him from the land of Egypt" (21:20-21).

Meanwhile, seeing God has wrought great miracles with Abraham, Abimelech, the Philistine king, wants to make a covenant with him. The Philistines settled in great numbers around 1200 B.C., but some sea traders settled on the coast as early as Abraham's time.

Soon afterwards, a dispute arose since some of Abimelech's men seized a well Abraham had dug. In this dry land, water was the most valuable commodity, and without it, the livestock could die. So Abraham protested, and in typical fashion of the day, used livestock to affirm his oath, and called the place Beersheba, which means "well of the oath of seven" because of the seven ewe lambs Abraham gave Abimelech to secure the legal rights and peace. Beersheba would be the southernmost frontier of the future land of Israel.

Now we come upon one of the most important and inspiring chapters in all the Bible—Genesis 22. We continue with the parallels between Abraham and Isaac, and God the Father and Christ. This would be the most difficult test of faith Abraham would ever face. "Now it came to pass after these things that God tested Abraham, and said to him, 'Abraham!' And he said, 'Here I am.'" Then He said, 'Take now your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the *land of Moriah*, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you.' So Abraham

rose early in the morning and saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son; and he split the wood for the burnt offering, and arose and went to the place of which God had told him." What an example of faith! Abraham's response was astonishing—he gave instant, unquestioning obedience to God, and showed his faith *had faith-led works*, as mentioned in James 2:21. The account continues, "Then on the third day Abraham lifted his eyes and saw the place afar off. And Abraham said to his young men, 'Stay here with the donkey; the lad and I will go yonder and worship, and we will come back to you.' But Isaac spoke to Abraham his father and said, 'My father!' And he said, 'Here I am, my son.' Then he said, 'Look, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?' And Abraham said, 'My son, God will provide for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering.' So the two of them went together. Then they came to the place of which God had told him. And Abraham built an altar there and placed the wood in order; and he bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar, upon the wood" (22:4-9).

(6). We see a parallel in that both sons were obedient to their fathers, even unto death. Isaac, now a strong young man, could have resisted being bound, but didn't struggle, and Christ could have resisted being sacrificed, but didn't.

"And Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. But the Angel of the Lord called to him from heaven and said, 'Abraham, Abraham!' So he said, 'Here I am.' And He said, 'Do not lay your hand on the lad, or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me'" (22:10-12).

(7). The seventh parallel is quite obvious, as Isaac was the beloved son of Abraham, and Jesus is the beloved Son of God. Abraham showed his faithfulness by willing to sacrifice Isaac, and God the Father showed His faithfulness by offering His only begotten Son for the sins of the world.

Then Abraham lifted his eyes and looked, and there behind him was a ram caught in a thicket by its horns. So Abraham went and took the ram, and offered it up for a burnt offering instead of his son. And Abraham called the name of the place, The Lord-Will-Provide; as it is said to this day, 'In the Mount of the Lord it shall be provided.'

This very spot where Abraham was willing to sacrifice Isaac, and where God took a solemn vow to bring the Redeemer to the earth and offer Him as a blessing to all the nations is Mount Moriah, which later became the place where the Temple of Jerusalem was built (see 2 Chronicles 3:1) and it is on the same ridge of that mountain where he was crucified.

“Then the Angel of the Lord called to Abraham a second time out of heaven, and said, ‘By Myself I have sworn, says the Lord, because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son, blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies. In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice.’ So Abraham returned to his young men, and they rose and went together to Beersheba; and Abraham dwelt at Beersheba” (22:15-19).

(8). By this willingness to sacrifice Isaac, Abraham received even more physical blessings from God. By God’s willingness to sacrifice His Son, the world would receive an even greater spiritual blessing—the opportunity to receive eternal life and enter into His kingdom.

(9). Another parallel is that the sparing of Isaac is symbolic of the resurrection of Jesus. Abraham believed if he sacrificed Isaac, God was powerful enough to resurrect him. “By faith, Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac...concluding that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense” (Hebrew 11:17-18). Abraham considered Isaac as “dead” while he traveled three days to sacrifice him, but received him alive, and Jesus was dead for three days until He was resurrected.

Back to Abraham’s blessings—his descendants would possess the gates of their enemies, an the prophecy has a dual application: first, Abraham’s descendants would possess the land of Canaan and the gates of their enemies. But secondly, Abraham’s descendants would one day spread to their preordained places around the world, notably the descendants of Ephraim and Manasseh, and possess the gates of their enemies, those key locations to help them reach their prophesied wealth and power through Abraham’s later day blessings (Genesis 49).

Next, Sarah dies at the age of 127, and Abraham buys a cave and some land from the Hittite owners. The deal is typical of the bartering that goes back and forth in Beduin fashion and Abraham did not take advantage of the situation, paying in full for the place. “And after this, Abraham buried Sarah his wife in the cave of the field and the cave that is in it were deeded to Abraham by the sons of Heth as property for a burial place” (23:19).

Isaac was now 37 years old, without his mother, and Abraham sees he needs a wife, which God had promised one from his kinfolk. “So Abraham said to the oldest servant of his house, who ruled over all that he had. ‘Please, put your hand under my thigh, and I will make you swear by the Lord, the God of heaven and the God of the earth, that you will not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell; but you shall go to my country and to my family, and take a wife for my son Isaac...The Lord God of heaven, who took me from my father’s house...and who spoke to me and swore to me, saying, ‘To your descendants I give this land. He will send His angel before you, and you shall take a wife for my son from there.’ And if the woman is not willing to follow you, then you will be released from this oath; only do not take my son back there” (24:2-8).

This seemed a nearly impossible undertaking for the servant and he asked Abraham if it was not better to take Isaac along. But Abraham replied that Isaac should stay in this land which was promised by God, and not settle anywhere else, and a covenant had been made. Abraham was exercising his faith and knew God had promised him that through Isaac, the entire world would be blessed. He believed God was working things out for good and the best possibility was that he find a believing bride among his kinfolk. But if things did not work out in this manner, they would in another. That is true faith, doing your part and expecting God to do His—and in the meantime, being very patient as Abraham was.

The oath taken by the servant placing his hand in the inner thigh of Abraham meant that if he failed to carry out the orders, the posterity of Abraham would wreak vengeance for the breach of faith.

“Then the servant took ten of his master’s camels and departed, for all his master’s goods were in his hand. And he arose and went to Mesopotamia, to the city of Nahor” (24:10).

Knowing how much everything depended on faith, the servant prayed to God to provide a sign that the woman who supplied him with water and for his camels would be the future bride of Isaac. Sure enough it was Rebekah who came and drew water for everyone--a very strenuous job not normally done for strangers—for camels drink an enormous amount of water! She then invited them to her house to feed the camels. He asked her what family she was from, and to his surprise, they were Abraham's kin. "Then the man bowed down his head and worshipped the Lord. And he said, 'Blessed be the Lord God of my master Abraham, who has not forsaken His mercy and His truth toward my master. As for me, being on the way, the Lord led me to the house of my master's brethren. So the young woman ran and told her mother's household these things. Now Rebekah had a brother whose name was Laban...when he saw the nose ring, and the bracelets on his sister's wrists...And he said, 'Come in, O blessed of the Lord!'" (24:26-31). This Laban was the same one Jacob would later encounter, and we can see wily Laban was attracted to anything dealing with wealth.

The servant stayed with them and related all the instructions Abraham had given him and of the miraculous sign of Rebekah's appearance and actions. Laban, Rebekah's brother and Bethuel, her father, both agreed all of this came from God and were willing to let her go, but it was up to Rebekah to accept the offer to marry Isaac. "Then they called Rebekah and said to her, 'Will you go with this man?' And she said, 'I will go.' So they sent away Rebekah their sister and her nurse, and Abraham's servant and his men" (24:58-59).

When they arrived, Isaac was in the field, meditating on God's way, and saw the caravan coming. "Then Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent; and he took Rebekah and she became his wife, and he loved her. So Isaac was comforted after his mother's death" (24:67).

Here are more parallels that now include Abraham, Isaac and Rebekah on one side, and God the Father and Christ on the other.

(10). Abraham sees the need for Isaac to have a bride, not from the pagan Canaanites, but from his own faith. So even then, the principle of the faithful not marrying the faithless, or becoming unequally yoked with an unbeliever, still applies. Meanwhile, God the Father is preparing a bride for Christ, not

from the unbelievers, but from converted Christians--those that "keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus" (Revelation 14:12).

(11). Rebekah shows faith in the promises offered her in marrying Isaac, a young man she has not seen. She hears that Abraham is after a bride for his son who is going to inherit all things and has the faith all of this is from God. Similarly, the Church shows faith in the promises offered by God in someday spiritually marrying Christ, His Son, who will inherit all things. Yet Christ is someone they have not seen and they have to exercise faith in trusting God. As Peter says about Jesus, "Whom having not seen you love" (1 Peter 1:8).

(12). Rebekah accepts becoming the bride of Isaac, and she is given many precious things as a dowry. When a person accepts becoming the future bride of Christ, he or she is given an earnest of the Holy Spirit, which is a first deposit of the Holy Spirit, with the promise of receiving the full payment in the resurrection.

(13). Rebekah meets Isaac, and he takes her in, loves and marries her. Jesus Christ will come, take His Bride in, love and spiritually marry her. It is a marriage based on faith, and it will be a wonderful love story that will continue for eternity!

The Bible says, "Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready. And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. Then he said to me, 'Write: Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!'" (Rev. 19:7-9). May we persevere to the end in our faith and be part of that wonderful spiritual wedding!