

## **Genesis 16: Ishmael**

### **05-06-18 AM**

#### **Part 1: The story of Ishmael**

We read in Gen 16 the origin of Ishmael. He was born 13 years before Isaac. He was not the son of promise from God, but an action of insecurity and weakness. Later on we read that Ishmael became the ancestor of twelve clans of nomads (Genesis 25:7-8). These clans settled in the area we call Arabia, and are identified as the Arab peoples today (who are also identified as descended from Abraham through his son Midian). As well, Ishmael was an ancestor of the Edomites through his daughter (Genesis 28:9).

#### **Part 2: Sarai's Insecurity**

Sarai told Abram this was his fault, although it was her suggestion. We might consider here that Abram permitted his wife's insecurity in this situation. He ought not to have agreed with her, but understood she was not certain of her place in the promise (consider Gen. 15:4). This is an important lesson in marriage. Godly wives are called daughters of Sarah in 1 Peter 3, and in verse 7 men are told to live with understanding. Men need to know that it is important to help their wives overcome insecurity (and vice versa). We all need to put aside insecurity and be people of faith (Jeremiah 17:7-8).

#### **Part 3: Outworking God**

Consider that another problem here was the lack of faith to trust God's plan. Abram's action was meant to accomplish God's purpose. We might see that in Abram's eyes God's way was not netting results. Too often we still think this way. For example, God tells us how to act in our lives (Ephesians 5:22 – 6:9). He says that in our marriages, in our work, and in our family relationships we are to submit and love and serve. The promise is that if we do, God will be with us. Too often we use human reasoning and reject God's directions because we think that it won't work. Our problem is that we then have denied God His part in acting in our lives.

This is also true in God's design for the church. In Ephesians 4:10-15 a very simple pattern for the church is given. But too often men "outthink" God and try to create better ways to do evangelism or benevolence. God's pattern works because God does the work (1 Cor. 3:6-7). When men create institutions or organizations to do this work, or add to the work of the church, they are following the mistake of Abram and not trusting God to do His part. The same is true in works like church oversight or church discipline; men doubt God will act and in desperation make compromises or inactions that cause greater damage.

In everything we do, we need to trust that God will bring His desired results in His time. Faith requires us to believe He will succeed. As God said in Isaiah 55:11, His word *"it will not return to Me empty, without accomplishing what I desire, and without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it"*.

#### **Part 4: Ishmael as a Foreshadow**

Finally, Ishmael is important to the New Covenant as a foreshadow of the conflict of the Old and New. In Galatians 4:21-30 Paul says that Ishmael is a representation of the Jews who did not follow Christ. While they were sons in the flesh of Abraham, they were not the sons of Promise, and persecuted the sons of promise.