

Lesson 6
Son of Laughter
God's special promise to Abraham, from Genesis 12 - 21

The Jesus Storybook Bible - pgs.56 - 61

When God calls Abraham in Genesis 12, God promises in verse 2 – 3: “I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing . . . and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.”

First, God promises to make Abraham into “a great nation,” in other words, into a whole new country or society. Second, God promises that Abraham will be blessed and get a great name. This second promise means a special covenantal and personal relationship with God. Third, God promises that “all peoples on earth will be blessed through Abraham.” This is, of course, astonishing. Ultimately, God is going to save his people through Abraham’s family.

But all of these incredible promises rest on one linchpin promise. In verse 7 God says that Abraham will have “offspring.” If no child is born to Abraham, there is no possibility for any new humanity or salvation for the earth. But Abraham’s wife Sarah is barren. Genesis 11:30 says that Sarah was “childless because she was not able to conceive.” Packed into this little phrase is a world of misery.

In ancient societies all aspirations were focused on one’s family. It was for the success, prominence, and prosperity of one’s family that everyone dreamed. In that context, then, the importance of having children was paramount. All the hopes and dreams anyone had were bound up in having strong, faithful, successful children who carried on the family name and honored their parents. Sarah’s barrenness, then, would have been a source of the greatest shame, pain, and discouragement.

It also meant that the redemption of the world would hinge on the miraculous birth of a child to a barren woman. So if God’s promises are to be fulfilled, if salvation is to come, then everything depends on something that Abraham and Sarah cannot accomplish in their own ability. All of it is based on the gracious, miraculous birth of the son of promise. There will have to be a supernatural intervention of God into history for all of this to take place.

The birth of Isaac shows not only that God is gracious and powerful beyond all imagining but also that salvation will not come through human effort. This is the main theme of Genesis: how God fulfills his promises to Abraham by grace and, through those promises, restores the world lost in Eden. Of course, from our vantage point we can see that this is not just the theme of Genesis, but of the whole Bible and therefore of all of human history.

It is hard not to notice that centuries later another angelic messenger comes to another incredulous woman to tell her about another miraculous birth, and he answers her doubt by saying: “No word from God will ever fail” (Luke 1:37). Unless Isaac was born, God’s people could not be blessed and

saved, but in the end, he only points to the ultimate “Isaac” through whom all God’s promises are ultimately fulfilled.

Memory Verse

Genesis 15:6

"Abraham believed the Lord."

***Lesson taken from *The Jesus Storybook Bible Curriculum*, written by Sally Lloyd-Jones and Sam Shammas.

If you do not have a copy of The Jesus Storybook Bible, we will have them for purchase in Cranmer Hall for \$10.