

IN THE BEGINNING – PART 12
The Birth of Isaac

- ❖ Abraham was 75 years old when he left Haran. It was following Abraham's separation from Lot that the Lord promised to give the land of Canaan to Abraham and his descendants (would be as the dust of the earth) forever. However, for this to be a reality, Abraham needed a son and it was about 30 years after leaving Ur when the son of promise was born as Isaac was born when Abraham was one hundred years old.

Gen.13:14 *And the LORD said to Abram, after Lot had separated from him: "Lift your eyes now and look from the place where you are-northward, southward, eastward, and westward; 15 "for all the land which you see I give to you and your descendants forever. 16 "And I will make your descendants as the dust of the earth; so that if a man could number the dust of the earth, then your descendants also could be numbered.*

- ❖ In Genesis 16, Ishmael was born when Abraham was 86 years old and God did not speak to him for a period of 13 years. When God spoke to him again at the age of 99 years, we see the initial mention of **Isaac** when God responded to Abraham who was suggesting that Ishmael should be the son of promise.

Gen.17:19 *Then God said: "No, Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name **Isaac**; I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his descendants after him. 20 And as for Ishmael, I have heard you. Behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly. He shall beget twelve princes, and I will make him a great nation. 21 But My covenant I will establish with **Isaac**, whom Sarah shall bear to you at this set time next year." 22 Then He finished talking with him, and God went up from Abraham.*

Gen 18:9 *Then they said to him, "Where is Sarah your wife?" So he said, "Here, in the tent." 10 And He said, "I will certainly return to you according to the time of life, and behold, Sarah your wife shall have a son." (Sarah was listening in the tent door which was behind him.) 11 Now Abraham and Sarah were old, well advanced in age; and Sarah had passed the age of childbearing. 12 Therefore Sarah laughed within herself, saying, "After I have grown old, shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?" 13 And he LORD said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh, saying, 'Shall I surely bear a child, since I am old?' 14 Is anything too hard for the LORD? At the appointed time I will return to you, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son." 15 But Sarah denied it, saying, "I did not laugh," for she was afraid. And He said, "No, but you did laugh!"*

Gen 21:1 *And the LORD visited Sarah as He had said, and the LORD did for Sarah as He had spoken. 2 For Sarah conceived and bore Abraham a son in his old age, at the set time of which God had spoken to him. 3 And Abraham called the name of his son who was born to him-whom Sarah bore to him-**Isaac**. 4 Then Abraham circumcised his son Isaac when he was eight days old, as God had commanded him. 5 Now Abraham was one hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him.*

- ❖ In the above passages, we see what God stated in Genesis 17, affirmed in Genesis 18 and confirmed in Genesis 21. There are a few things that stand out from these passages that I would like us to pay attention to;

- The most significant thing we will note from the birth of Isaac is that it takes place through supernatural intervention, 'the Lord visited Sarah'. Both Abraham and Sarah were beyond the age of childbearing.

Gen. 18:11 *Now Abraham and Sarah were old, well advanced in age; and Sarah had passed the age of childbearing.*

Heb. 11:12 *Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born as many as the stars of the sky in multitude--innumerable as the sand which is by the seashore.*

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- ✓ Without the supernatural intervention of the Lord, the birth of Isaac would have been impossible. And the significance of this is that it forms the type for the supernatural birth of our Savior.

Luke 1:34 Then Mary said to the angel, *“How can this be, since I do not know a man?”*

35 And the angel answered and said to her, *“The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God. 36 Now indeed, Elizabeth your relative has also conceived a son in her old age; and this is now the sixth month for her who was called barren. 37 For with God nothing will be impossible.”* (**Gen.18:14** *Is anything too hard for the LORD?*)

- We can see that Isaac was born ‘at the set time of which God had spoken to him’ and the same is true for the birth of Jesus.

Gal 4:4 But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law...

- ✓ Whereas it was some 30 years beyond the beginning of His dealings with Abraham that God reveals the son of promise and it was some 4000 years beyond the beginning of His dealings with Man before the advent of the promised Seed of the Woman.
- ✓ And what we should see from this is that God’s concept of time is very different to ours. Perhaps because of the brevity of our earthly existence we have a need for things to happen quickly, but not so with God.
- ✓ There are 4 millennia between the promised Seed of the Woman and the birth of the Christ – BUT that which God has said will come to pass, in accordance with His timing, even if it is beyond our physical lifetime.

- With respect to the Lord’s second advent the scripture records –

2Pet. 3:4 and saying, *“Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation.”*

- ✓ We should know that the promise of His coming is everywhere in the scriptures. Just as there was the fullness of time during His first Advent, there will also be another fullness of time; a set time and His second coming will be take place.
- ✓ The point is this; we were not there when Adam was created, we did not see the birth of Isaac, nor Israel delivered from Egypt, nor our Lord’s birth, death and resurrection and we have not yet seen His return. From the ordinariness of our daily lives we can easily begin to think that nothing will change but, set over against the continuance of our daily routine is that which God has said in His word and with that our choice to believe Him, to have faith in the things not yet seen. We must know that His return is with no shadow of doubt, certain and it will happen at an appointed time.

Psa. 37:10 *For yet a little while and the wicked shall be no more; Indeed, you will look carefully for his place, But it shall be no more.*

Jer. 51:33 *For thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: “The daughter of Babylon is like a threshing floor When it is time to thresh her; Yet a little while And the time of her harvest will come.”*

Heb. 10: 35 *Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward. 36 For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise: 37 “For yet a little while, And He who is coming will come and will not tarry. 38 Now the just shall live by faith; But if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him.” 39 But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul.*

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- There is an appointed time, a set time, when God will bring to pass all that He has promised. It will be exactly in His timing, according to that which He set in place before time began and revealed through His Word. He will be neither late nor early, but absolutely on time – His time, not ours.

- And during the fleeting vapor that is our life, God is working to prepare us for the fulfillment of His purpose. Let us be patient, let us be resolute, let us be steadfast, and immovable in the faith.

Heb 3:14 *For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end.*

Heb 12:5 *And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: "My son, do not despise the chastening [Lit. child training] of the LORD, Nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; 6 For whom the LORD loves He chastens, And scourges every son whom He receives." 7 If you endure chastening [child training], God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten?*

❖ God had been faithful to His word to Abraham and Isaac was born to Sarah, the son of Abraham's old age, just as He had said.

Gen. 21:8 *So the child grew and was weaned. And Abraham made a great feast on the same day that Isaac was weaned. 9 And Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had borne to Abraham, scoffing. 10 Therefore she said to Abraham, "Cast out this bondwoman and her son; for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, namely with Isaac."*

- We see here that 'on the same day that Isaac was weaned' that 'the son of Hagar the Egyptian' was 'scoffing', was mocking Isaac.

- As we think about this, let's remember that Isaac pictures the man of the spirit, the new man and Ishmael, the son of Hagar the Egyptian, the man of the flesh, the old man; Abram being the father of Ishmael and Abraham the father of Isaac. One born of the flesh the other born of the Spirit.

- And then let's consider, what it means to be weaned. It means to stop taking milk and begin to eat solid food.

Isa 28:9 *Whom will he teach knowledge? And whom will he make to understand the message? Those just weaned from milk? Those just drawn from the breasts?*

Heb 5:12 *For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. 13 For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. 14 But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.*

❖ There comes a point in our Christian experience when we should be weaned from milk and begin to eat solid food. And according to our verses the milk of the Word is, 'the first principles of the oracles of God', 'the elementary principles of Christ', whereas solid food has to do with Christ and His Kingdom and the Melchizedek priesthood – the word of righteousness, the word of truth, the message of the cross, the word of the Kingdom, the salvation of the soul.

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- According to Genesis, there had been peace in the tents of Abraham all while Ishmael dwelt there alone and even immediately following the birth of Isaac, but once Isaac was weaned then the mocking and the scoffing began.

- All while our old man dwells in the body alone there is ‘peace’ and even following the birth of the new man, but if we make the transition from the milk of the Word to the solid food of the Word, that is when trouble begins. All the while there is no spiritual growth there is no conflict, but once that growth begins, then watch out.

Gal. 4:28 Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are children of promise. **29** But, as he who was born according to the flesh then persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit, even so it is now.

Gal. 5:17 For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish.

Gal. 4:30 Nevertheless what does the Scripture say? "Cast out the bondwoman and her son, for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman." **31** So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman but of the free.

- And if we would like an even more graphic picture of the conflict of the man of the flesh against the man of the spirit we need only look to the Middle East and see what is happening, and has been happening for the past 70 years, as the descendants of Ishmael dwell in the tent of Abraham with the descendants of Isaac.

❖ Although Sarah’s demand that Hagar and Ishmael should be ‘cast out’ was ‘very displeasing in Abraham’s sight’, the Lord affirmed this to Abraham and reaffirmed the place of Isaac with respect to the promise of inheriting the land.

Gen 21:12 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.

- It would be from Isaac and Isaac alone that the seed of Abraham would come, those who would be as the sand on the seashore and the stars in the sky and through Isaac and Isaac alone that THE Seed of Abraham would come.

Gal. 3:16 Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, "And to seeds," as of many, but as of one, "And to your Seed," who is Christ.

Gen. 22:1 Now it came to pass after these things that God tested Abraham, and said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." **2** 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."

- We can see clearly from these verses that ‘that God tested Abraham’, drawing our attention to exactly what was taking place. But the main question is, what exactly was Abraham’s test and how can we know?

✓ Well the first part of the answer can be found in –

1Pet.1:7 that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ...

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It was then the genuineness of Abraham's faith that was to be tested and it would be his faith, him believing God, with respect to that said in Genesis 21:12... 'for in Isaac your seed shall be called', reflecting back on the promise of the inheritance to Abraham's descendants

✓ The test was the sacrifice of Isaac and we know all too well that Abraham obeyed God in this.

Heb. 11:17 *By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, 18 of whom it was said, "In Isaac your seed shall be called," 19 concluding that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense.*

- ❖ All the events of Abraham's life had been moving inexorably towards this test which can be seen as the pinnacle of his life and he had all his previous experiences, trials and testings' to draw from when it came to this moment. He could recall his delay in Haran, being on the mountain between Bethel and Ai, his descent into Egypt and his return to the terebinth trees of Mamre, which are in Hebron. He could look to his dealings with Lot, with Hagar, with Ishmael; to the events surrounding the miraculous birth of Isaac, his victory against the kings, his encounter with Melchizedek and speaking with the Lord face to face and the promises given. Every twist and turn through Abraham's life had purpose, nothing was random.
- ❖ The events of Genesis Chapters 12-21 are the precursor to the test in Chapter 22, and the test in Chapter 22 must be accomplished before the death of Sarah in Chapter 23, which must take place before the search for the bride for Isaac in Chapter 24 and this must take place before the remarriage of Abraham in Chapter 25, because of the typology they form. In one sense the events of Genesis Chapter 22 are pivotal, not only to the Book of Genesis, but also to the outworking of God's eternal purpose.
- ❖ It is the clear evidence of scripture that God has, throughout history, moved his people through a variety of experiences and trials for specific reasons and it is absolutely no different for us today. This is why we are told – **Jas. 1:2** *My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials,*

- The various trials are brought into our life with purpose –

Jas. 1:3 *knowing that the testing [proving] of your faith produces patience. 4 But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.*

The various trials to test our faith are to produce 'patience', the translation of a Greek word that is better understood as 'patient endurance'. If patient endurance has its 'perfect work' or is allowed to come to completion through the process seen in 2 Peter Chapter 1, then we shall come to that place of spiritual maturity, receiving the salvation of our souls and with respect to our entrance into the coming Kingdom, we will lack nothing.

We find the same admonition in Hebrews Chapter 12 as the writer reflects upon the catalogue of the faithful in Chapter 11 –

Heb. 12:1 *Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance [Lit. 'patient endurance' – same word seen in James 1:3-4] the race that is set before us,*

- Why is patient endurance so important that God would orchestrate our lives in such a way so as to produce it in us? Well, it is intimately associated with the process to spiritual maturity as we have seen, but, even beyond that we find this in-

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2Tim. 2:11 *This is a faithful saying: For if we died with Him, We shall also live with Him. 12 If we endure, [have ‘patient endurance’] We shall also reign with Him. If we deny Him, He also will deny us.*

✓ Do you see it? *If we patiently endure we shall also reign with Him.*

Jas 1:12 *Blessed is the man who endures [patiently endures] temptation; for when he has been approved [when the genuineness of his faith has been proven], he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.*

Heb 10:36 *For you have need of endurance [patient endurance], so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise...*

- ❖ Let us not despair as we look back over the struggles and the failures in our lives or as we encounter the challenges of the present, for God has one great and glorious purpose in it all –

Rom. 8:16 *The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, 17 and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together. 18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. 19 For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God. 20 For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope; 21 because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. 22 For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now. 23 Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body..... 28 And we know that all things work together [are in the process of working together] for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. 29 For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. 30 Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.*

1Cor 15:49 *And as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man.*

- ❖ As we look at ourselves today we can't escape the fact that we bear the image of the man of dust, but God's glorious purpose in us looks beyond the man of dust and our present trials and testing, to that future day when we will bear the image of the heavenly Man, occupying positions of power and authority with Christ as firstborn sons of God in the coming Kingdom.
- ❖ This then is the great work of God; this is the glorious purpose of God in us, our heavenly calling.
Gal.3:5 *Therefore He who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you, does He do it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? -- 6 just as Abraham "believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." 7 Therefore know that only those who are of faith are sons of Abraham. 8 And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, saying, "In you all the nations shall be blessed." 9 So then those who are of faith are blessed with believing Abraham.*
1Pet. 1:3 *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, 5 who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. 6 In this*

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*you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by **various trials**, **7** that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of **Jesus Christ**, **8** whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, **9** receiving the end of your faith--the salvation of your souls.*

- Let us always remember, that we are all called, and our calling is the same – **the Heavenly Calling!**
We will continue from here God willing, but let us in the meantime remain diligent.

Questions

1. Read Genesis 17:21 – Why do you think God waited 30 years before giving Abraham the son that He had promised?
 - a. Why could Ishmael never be that son?
 - b. Read Luke 1:34-35 – What is the connection between these verses and what we have seen concerning Isaac?
 - c. Read Genesis 21:1-2 and Galatians 4:4 – What do we learn from these 2 verses?
 - d. Why do you think God waited 4000 years before providing the Seed of the Woman promised in Genesis?
 - e. What can we know of God from this and what are the challenges that we face in reconciling God's timing with the brevity of our lifetime?
- 2). Read Genesis 21:8-10 – According to these verses, what is the event that causes Ishmael to mock Isaac?
 - a. From a scriptural perspective what do milk and solid food picture for us?
 - b. What is the milk of the word and what is solid food and how would we know?
 - c. Does what we see in Genesis 21:8-10 apply to our own experience? (Scriptures please)

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d. How can we also see this in world events?

3). Read Genesis 22:1-2 – What does God make very clear in v1?

a. What 2 things does the Lord say concerning Isaac at the beginning of v2 and what might we learn from these?

b. What exactly is the basis from Abraham's testing? Which scriptures did we see?

c. What bearing, if any, do all the events in Abraham's life have upon this test?

d. Read James 1:2-3 – what do the scriptures teach us about why we should count it all joy when we fall into various trials?

e. What is another term that we could use for this process?

f. What is the great purpose of God in our lives and which scripture did we look at that describes it?

g. What impact do you think what we have learned here should have on how we view our lives?

h. In the light of all of this read 1 Peter 1:3-9 – what do you see in these verses?

● **Any final thoughts?**