

7119

MID-WEST BIBLE SCHOOL - 1995

ABRAHAM, THE FRIEND OF GOD

Speaker: Bro. John Martin

Class #5

In Isaac shall thy Seed be Called

Reading: Genesis 18, 20

Well, my beloved brethren and sisters in our Lord Jesus Christ, we've come to that point in our story, and of course, I'm bridging the story, you realize there'll be gaps in this, but we're taking the main issues in Abraham's life, and we've come to that point in the story that I talked about when, the spotlight was to fall very, very much upon Sarah. And there was going to be a concentration now, b&s, as the boy was to be born, as it drew near, the spotlight comes very much upon Sarah. And Sarah, of course, was to be the one through whom the seed of the woman would come, and ultimately, of course, our Lord Jesus Christ.

We'll have to use several chapters this morning, b&s, to illustrate this and we're going to commence in chapter 18. And the story is, of course, that the angels on the way to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah, turned aside that they might reveal unto Abraham their plans because he was God's friend, and God doesn't hold anything back from His friends, He confides in them, as we learned, of course, in our first study. And in Genesis chapter 18, b&s, we have this record of the angels coming to Sarah in verse 9, and they came to Abraham first of all and said unto him, 'Where is Sarah thy wife?' (note the title because that's what she was, his wife in the truest sense of the word) 'And he said, behold, in the tent?' Who's tent? You see, Sarah had her own tent, we learn that, b&s, in the 24th chapter of Genesis in verses 6 and 7, 'that when Isaac brought Rebekah home, he put her in his mother's tent'; she had her own tent. But where is she now? Well, verse 10, at the end of verse 10, 'she stood in the tent door behind Abraham'; she was in his tent. You say, well, that's just incidental; is it? Now I want you to turn to 1 Peter chapter 3, b&s, and when you do I want you to put something in here, because we're going to come back here about 3 times this morning, because every comment in this section of the epistle of Peter, is full of meaning. We've already alluded to it in other studies, but we're going to come back here several times to Peter. Here we find Sarah in his tent, and in verse 7, Peter speaking about Sarah and Abraham, of course, he makes reference to them in verse 6, and in verse 7, 'Likewise ye husbands, dwell with them' (and that's what they were doing at this time, b&s) 'according to knowledge (so there's something knowledgeable about dwelling with your wife in this spirit) 'and giving

honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel'; now there's the knowledge that Abraham had to have. The knowledge, b&s, that not only was it right, but an act of courtesy and love, to dwell with his wife; that's axiomatic, we don't need to have knowledge to know that! The knowledge is that Yahweh the God of heaven was to honour that woman, why shouldn't we? That's the point! She may be the weaker vessel, and not a second class citizen, but built for a specific purpose, not like the man, and in that sense, a weaker vessel. She may be, but Yahweh honoured her! Abraham's got to honour her. If God manifestation means anything, b&s, it's not just a doctrine, it's a way of life; it means we do what our Heavenly Father does, we think what He thinks, and we love what He loves! And we honour what He honours, that's the knowledge that Abraham had to have. And so when those angels visited Sarah, they came with a specific purpose, b&s, to bestow upon her enormous honour.

And we read back in the 18th chapter of Genesis, 'that they came to her' in verse 9, and then in verse 10 we read this, 'And he said, I will certainly return unto thee according to the time of life'. I will return, and when I quoted earlier, b&s, remember Romans 9 and verse 9, when Paul was to put forth the quintessence of the promise, he said, 'this is the Word of promise', what is it? What's the kernel of it? 'I will return and Sarah will have a son'; here's the nerve of that promise, DIVINE INTERVENTION, activity from on high, with a weaker vessel! That's the nerve of it, b&s, and that's what the apostle said, 'At this time I will return and Sarah will have a son'. What time? Well, the record here says, the time of life; the time of life says the record, in the Hebrew, living time; Rotherham picking that up beautifully renders it the quickening season; we would call it Spring. We would call it the time of the Passover, b&s, Spring, when all those little buds come forth from dead sticks, seemingly dead sticks that is; which starkly silhouetted against the winter sky seems absolutely bereft of life, but at the quickening season we see the little tinge of the green bud poking its nose through, don't we? I'm crazy at that time of the year; I go outside and I expect them every day and I watch them grow, and it never ceases to fascinate me; and here is Sarah at the quickening season, and God is going to quicken something?

What's He going to quicken? Well, God says in verse 11, 'that Abraham and Sarah were well stricken in age; and it ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women'. We all know what that means, it had stopped, hadn't it? those necessary functions of her body, she'd come to the change of life. And now it's absolutely out of the question, that children should be born. And so, b&s, God waited didn't He? He waited until it became out of the question; now you listen to this, you know in John chapter 1 and verse 13, you probably recognize the words, when John was speaking about the way in which spiritual sons are born, he says, 'not of blood nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man but by God'. Now you think about it! It ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women, (not of blood) 'She said, shall I have pleasure my lord being old also' (so it was no longer a pleasure in that sense, it ceased to be the will of the flesh), and the two of them had got together to use an Egyptian woman to anticipate the promises of God, (so it ceased to be by the will of man too) and these three things are here in this record, in this woman. So it wasn't of blood, it's wasn't by their own pleasure, and it wasn't by their own schemes; there's a deadness here as far as man is concerned, and God is going to

come to her in the quickening season. Wonderful isn't it?

And Sarah laughed; she laughed, and we criticize her for that, b&s, but it would be rather strange, wouldn't it? An old lady in that condition and I suppose she shouldn't have laughed, it was not right to laugh, but she did, and we can all understand why she laughed; and you remember when we talked about Abraham laughing and made the differentiation and we said that he laughed in belief, and I know that some people disagree with that and I'd like to say, that we can beg to differ, and I can understand, but I really can't say that because I don't believe he laughed in disbelief, b&s, I do not believe that! Do you know the difference? He laughed in his heart, and Sarah laughed in her belly. The words in the Hebrew are different; he laughed here in his heart and she laughed in her stomach. And you know, when Abraham laughed he fell on his face, because he was going to be made a father from whom the seed of the promise would come, who also would be the Son of God. And you know, it's marvellous, wonderful, that in Galatians 3, when Paul is dealing with the promises made to the fathers, and ends verse 3 and says, 'you're all Abraham's children by faith' and then in chapter 4, listen he says, 'God sent forth His Son, made of a woman' (so it's God's son born of a woman) and the next verse says, 'and you being sons He has sent forth the spirit of His son into your heart' (and we say, 'Abba, father, Abba, father' twice) and the point that Genesis was making was, 'Abraham, I will make you like Me, a father of many nations'; so we get it in the Hebrew and the Greek, because God sent forth the spirit of His Son into our hearts, so we cry! That's exactly what Abraham did! That's exactly the point, that when the spirit of His Son came into his heart, Abraham laughed with joy because he was going to be, Abba, father, like Me, and the context is the promises made to the fathers. And that's why Abraham laughed!

But Sarah laughed differently, she laughed in her bowels, and then she said something, b&s, which was rather interesting, she said in verse 12, 'she said, after I'm waxed old, shall I have pleasure my lord also being old'. Now we've got that reference in Peter haven't we, and you know, b&s, that's the only time ever in the record that's recorded, that Sarah ever called Abraham 'lord'; the only time she ever called him 'lord' and then in verses 5 and 6 of 1 Peter 3, 'for after this manner in the old time, the holy women also who trusted in God, adorned themselves being in subjection unto their own husbands: Even as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him 'lord'. Where did she call him 'lord'? Never audible, nobody heard it, she said it in here, (thanks bro. Harry for that point; first time I ever heard that was from yourself, so I got that from bro. Tennant on one of your tapes, I've never forgotten that, I thought what a wonderful thing that was) and you know, b&s, there are sisters, and I'm not here to be critical of you, but you see some sisters and they're very outspoken and very forward and they've got a hat on their head, I'm in subjection to my husband, can't you see, clump! so their hat is like a helmet, and they're calling their husband 'lord' alright with their lips; this woman called it inside, here, right in here. And look what he'd done in his lifetime; but she called him in here (stomach) and the only time it's ever recorded is in that record, when it was in her heart, and Peter talks about in verse 4, the 'hidden man of the heart', women should adorn themselves with a man secreted away in their life. Every wife in this audience, ought to have in her treasure house of her heart, secreted away for herself, her own personal possession,

which she should be justly proud of, and in love with that person, hidden in her heart, that's where Abraham was, locked away in Sarah's heart, not worn around her neck so that people could see a little heart in gold, and say 'he's my husband, I adore him you know!' No, in here, that's what Peter's talking about, the outward adorning of people putting on a show; they talk so wonderful about their partners and fight like mad in the kitchen. Secret, and in here, b&s, is where he was and that was the greatness of that woman.

And you know, she laughed about it, but in verse 14 she was told, b&s, 'is anything too hard for Yahweh?' Is anything too hard for the Lord? You know, the word 'pala' there, 'too hard', is that word which we find in the record rendered 'wonderful'; 'He shall be called Wonderful, it's that word which is found in Psalm 118 where it says 'this is marvellous in our eyes, it's the LORD's doing and it's marvellous in our eyes', and that was in reference to the stone which the builders rejected, and it was marvellous to think that there was a stone that had been rejected. The builders had shaped every other one and given them exquisite work and time to them, but there was one stone which nobody touched, and where was it? Well, in Herod's temple it was 46 years in building to the time of Christ but went on for nearly 20 years more; in that temple, b&s, every stone was adorned, as we all know and there was one stone, when Herod came to the Jews and said, 'you've got no ark, you didn't bring it back from Babylon; what do you want for the Most Holy Place? and they said, 'One great unhewn stone!' That was what was in Herod's temple, and there was one stone in there that the builders hadn't touched. And it was marvellous in the eyes of the Lord Jesus Christ though the others couldn't see it! And that's the word we've got here, and the thing that's going to happen to Sarah is going to be marvellous in the eyes of men because it's going to be the revelation of God shaping destiny, not man!

Now, we're going to slip over to chapter 20 to continue on with our story; we're not interested in the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, that's not going to take up our concern; we want to trace this woman and what happened with the birth of the seed, b&s. And in chapter 20 Abraham takes another dangerous turn; 'Abraham journeyed from thence toward the south country'. Now that's a dangerous business, b&s, when you go south, of course, the word 'south' there is 'negeb' that is the country round about Beer-sheba and below. If you trace the bottom of the Dead Sea, across towards the Mediterranean and a bit lower is Beer-sheba, and if you've got a picture of it in your mind, well, that area is what they call the Negev. It does duty for two ideas, both for 'south' and 'dry' and 'arid', and he goes down there, b&s, between Kadesh and Shur which was the region of the Philistines, and he comes to a place which is called Gerar (now you listen to this; it's just incredible how this record was written, which means 'a seed', a singular seed. And there are going to be things happen here, that could have raised questions, as to who was the father of 'the seed'. And not only that, b&s, but because God was to intervene again, to rescue Sarah and to prevent what could have been a disastrous thing to His purpose, and Isaac was born as 'a seed' a singular seed, it's recorded of him that he came back here, Isaac did, sowed the Land and reaped a hundred fold. Isn't that interesting, that when the true seed, a seed, a singular did come in Isaac, he came back here and reaped at this place, where there was 'one

seed' he reaped a hundred fold! And he's the only one in the record called 'his only begotten son'. 'And He says not to seeds of many, but as of one; and to thy seed which is Christ; but if He be Christ, then you're Abraham's seed in a multitude'. And there's a man who came to be a seed, 'the seed' and He has reaped, b&s, a thousand fold!

And so Abraham was here at this place, when of course, we have problems again with the prettiness of his wife. She was an attractive woman from a natural viewpoint; she didn't have to resort to Jezebel's cosmetics. God made her beautiful, b&s, she was beautiful according to nature. But people notice that and the man that noticed it, of course, was the king of Gerar here, whose name Abimelech means, the father (Ab) of the king (melech). Oh! now he's going to take her into his house, she's in his four walls isn't she? because again the expedient is taken that 'she's my sister' and Abraham again weakens, b&s, and in this situation (you know, these people are not perfect and we thank God for the revelation of their weaknesses because it does help us, doesn't it? to know that they weren't automatic, they weren't robots and under pressure they sometimes wilted) and he again denies his wife, and she lands up in this chap's house, the father of the king.

Now, he's a Philistine and Abraham has just been given the sign of circumcision. And the Philistines were known as 'the uncircumcized'; so who is going to be 'the father of the king', an uncircumcized Philistine or a circumcised Hebrew? Who is going to be the 'father of the king', a seed? that's going to be the burning question! and you know, that could never be allowed by the Father; it had to be clearly seen whose seed it was! Jesus didn't have that privilege, it was only a few who recognized that He was the seed of God. Other Jews went around saying, 'Huh, we weren't born of fornication! didn't they? Jesus had to suffer that, it wasn't as plain to His generation as this had to be plain. This had to be plain, b&s, for future generations to put their confidence in God as being able to produce the true seed in the right way. So what did God do? the last verse tells us what He did, the last verse of 20 says, 'For Yahweh had fast closed up all the wombs of the house of Abimelech BECAUSE of Sarah Abraham's wife' so that nobody would ever be able to misunderstand who was to be 'the father of the king' an uncircumcized Philistine or a circumcised Hebrew, in a very rapid manner. IMMEDIATELY God closed the shutters down, right, stop; and all in that household, (and that man would have had many wives according to the custom of the times); but nobody's having children, nobody is, so nobody can go around saying, 'I wonder who's that boy is? I wonder who his dad was? Nobody can say that.

And God revealed Himself to this man, and He said, 'you're a dead man; you keep away from the woman or you're a dead man'; and He told him in verse 3, that God would smite him with disease if he touched that woman, and we know, b&s, that He did that to prevent what could have been a disaster here! And Abimelech appeals to God, and Abimelech for all I've said about him, was a man of integrity; a Philistine, and here's the father of 'many nations' again, going to be taught a lesson by a Philistine. The record of the Word of God is incredible, b&s, these are not heros and heroines of fiction who are always coming out on top, who everybody depends upon, and of course, would never be seen in this light; this is the divine record when God doesn't take cognisance of flesh,

be it Abraham's or ours. And he's going to get taught a lesson by a Philistine, and God in heaven above acknowledged the sincerity of that king.

Verse 6, 'And God said unto him, I know you did it in the integrity of your heart', that's a Philistine king He's talking to, and despite his background, despite his environment, b&s, he was a genuine and sincere man, and we're going to see later on, that God took him into covenant relationship. And Abraham had wronged that man, and yet God tells this man in verse 7, you better restore this man his wife; 'for he is a prophet and he shall pray for you'. How would you like to accept that sort of a statement, b&s? Would you not say to God in reply in your heart in this dream, 'Hey, wait a minute, who's apologizing to whom? Come on now, I was in innocency!' and God says, 'I know you were', but he's going to pray for you. Look at the lessons being learnt! Here are two people coming together, Abraham and Abimelech, and they've both got to eat humble pie; that's how God works, b&s, that's why He divided the world into Jew and Gentile. See, we've ate humble pie, we've come to the waters of baptism and said to God, 'Israel are your people despite of what they've done, we not only accept them, we become part of them; we say we're spiritual Jews'. We're happy to do that, I was, and I'm sure you were, happy to accept that! They've yet got to do that, they have to face us in the kingdom, and we're going to be on the other side and they're going to be where we were; that's what Romans 11 is all about, and they're going to have to say, 'Hey, you were right about those people; they've got a right to be in your kingdom according to your grace; we've got to accept that'. And then the Jews will come into the kingdom, and we're all going to eat humble pie. That's what these two have got to do!

And so Abimelech had to swallow his pride and say, 'well, I was innocent but there must be something about this man that's extraordinary, although I think he's done me a great disservice. But he's going to pray for him, and Abraham would have been embarrassed to pray for the man, but isn't it wonderful the way God works with men; they've all got to help each other, but nobody can feel superior! And Abraham with red face would pray for him, because he was the cause of getting him into that mess in the first place. And Abimelech although in the right, would have to accept the fact that God regarded this man, as a man of faith, but not only as a man of faith but a prophet, and he had to accept the fact that that's God's view, despite what the man had done. Aren't there marvellous moral lessons in that, b&s? Isn't that the lesson of life? Of course, it is!

What does Abimelech do in order that everybody might know that everything's above board? You look at what he did in chapter 20 and verse 16, 'And unto Sarah he said, Behold, I have given thy brother a thousand pieces of silver: behold, he is to thee a covering of the eyes, unto all that are with thee, and with all other; thus she was reproved'. Now that's a pretty poor translation really, and you take most reliable translations and they will do that differently; now what was a thousand pieces of silver? Well, we don't know from this record but we can only be guided by the bible, that's our only dictionary, isn't it? and the bible says in the Song of Solomon chapter 8 verses 11 and 12, that the thousand pieces of silver was a symbol of ownership. Listen to what the Song of Solomon says 'the vineyard and the bride of Song of Solomon, 'the thousand pieces of silver was a symbol that the vineyards were Solomon and the bride is

Solomon's', that's what the bible says the thousand pieces of silver were, so we know from that record, taking it back here that it was a symbol, and what Abimelech did was virtually put a flag up, fluttering it for all the world to see, 'hey, this woman, I never came near her; I never touched her, this is not my wife but she belongs to that man over there; and that 1,000 pieces of silver he said, is going to become a token before everybody, that that's your true position'. And so nobody could go around and say, 'I wonder who the father of Isaac was?' It was clear who he was! The RSV puts it this way. 'Behold, I have given your brother a 1,000 pieces of silver; it is your vindication in the eyes of all who are with you, and before everyone, you are put right'. Isn't that beautiful? this is a Philistine king doing this, I've given this to your brother and it's a vindication in the eyes of everyone that can see it, that the thing has been put right, and so that incident, b&s, brought about deep and abiding feelings in three people, Abimelech, Abraham and Sarah.

Now Abraham, in the wrong in verse 17, has to pray unto God for this Philistine king and 'God healed him and his wife'. It doesn't say all in his house, (it separates his wife from the maidservants) and they bare children'; and you see, what happened was that circumstances had wrung out of Abraham, a prayer for a man that he'd wronged, and the effect of that prayer was that women could have children; and it had an electrifying effect upon his own wife. Come back to Peter and hear what he says, dealing with relationships of husband and wife, especially Sarah and Abraham. What does he say in 1 Peter 3 verse 7, 'Likewise ye husbands, dwell with them (and she was in his tent) giving honour unto the weaker vessel (because God was to honour her) why? 'that they might be heirs together (the 5th letter of the Hebrew alphabet changed both their names) and that your prayers be not cut off' as the Greek has it. Isn't that remarkable; and you know, b&s, you know that and I know that to be true. You know what happens in married life, nobody goes through married life perfectly; we all have our little tiffs; anybody says they don't is a liar. We all have our little tiffs, don't we? we get irritable and we come home from work and you're a bit irritable, your wife's had a bad day or something, and you might say an unkind word which leads to a bit of a retort back again and then a few more words and then there's some nasty things said and tears shed; do you feel like going and praying at that time? I don't, no way in the wide world can I pray. I could never bring myself to pray at that time; I pace up and down and all sorts of things, and there's got to be a making up before we can really get down on our knees before our God. Isn't that true of normal life? You can't pray to your God with that between you and your spouse, and although we live a fairly happy life together, (because Verna is very patient) you can't in those circumstances, and those things do come upon you and your prayers are cut off.

Look what happened here! and Sarah's been in that house and this is the second time it's happened, and Peter says she wasn't terrified, she wasn't put off with any terror; she still hasn't chopped Abraham out of her heart, he's still in there! despite all that and Abraham's made a big mistake; he's got to pray for the man he's wronged, so he's learned an enormous lesson, and they fall into each others' arms in prayer for the man that he wronged, and she conceives. Sarah does! See what Peter's saying?

Now, b&s, look what it says, (do you remember the words that I told you back in Genesis 17, to remember?) 'At the set time next year, Sarah shall have a son' and then it said (remember I told you to remember these words? I said they were going to come again, and here they come) when it says, 'And Elohim (now use the name and the title because I want you to see the point) it says 'Elohim left off talking with him, and went up from him', and so you have the lesser manifestation talking to the man about the theory of it all. But now listen to the record, Genesis 21, just look at the way it's written, and tell me that this is not written by God, 'and Yahweh visited Sarah as He had said, and Yahweh did unto Sarah as He had spoken. And Sarah conceived and bare Abraham a son in his old age, at the set time of which Elohim had spoken to him'. See the point? So here is the lesser manifestation talking to the man about the theory of it, and the greater manifestation coming to the woman in action about it. See where the spotlight is, b&s? it is clearly on that woman, isn't it? because this is to be workable, mighty God. GOD SENT FORTH HIS SON, that's the emphasizes! made of a woman, and how often is Galatians 4 verse 4 quoted, with the emphasizes upon made of a woman, and it's true; and it's not wrong that that's the case and it's not wrong to say that because He was made of a woman in our nature, that therefore, He was related to His own ... Oh, that's true but the emphasis is on HIS SON; That's where the emphasis is there and that's where it is here. This is the work of God upon a dead womb; it's the seed of the woman, and this is the closest thing you'll ever come to in the Old Testament to a virgin birth; Isaac was not born of a virgin, truly, but that boy would never had seen the light of day, had it not been for a visitation of the Mighty God. The extension of His own arm was here, b&s, HE WHO WILL BE came to that woman and visited her and did something of which He'd spoken through the Elohim to the man.

Look at how beautifully that's put! Now you know, Paul's comment about this incident is this, he said, 'Sarah herself received strength to conceive seed'; emphasis is on the word 'herself' because you see, she tried to do it through Hagar, she tried to have a baby by proxy in another woman; but not good enough! So Paul said she had to come to the point where Sarah herself had to receive strength to conceive 'seed'. Now the emphasis is on herself but here's an interesting thing; the word 'conceive seed' in Hebrews 11 and verse 11, is a word that's found 11 times in the New Testament. Now you know, I don't believe that because a word is found once here or once there, that it is necessarily significant; it all depends upon the contextual evidence. And you say, 'well, 11 times, how on earth would it be significant if it's eleven times? Ah, but you see, the other 10 times is in the same expresion, 'the foundation of the world'. You know, the blood of Abel which was shed from the foundation of the world, that's found 10 times in the New Testament, the only rendition of that Greek word outside those 10, is this one! So Paul is saying, 'Sarah herself (the emphasis in on 'herself') received strength to conceive the foundation seed and therefore he goes on to say, 'they came from one and him as good as dead, as many as the stars of heaven for multitude'. The question is, how did Paul know that that was the character of Sarah's faith? How was he able to know that? I mean it could have well been, couldn't it? that Sarah's faith was singular, that is, she had her mind upon her boy, the one boy. She was old and she would not have contemplated, of course, a big family, would she? so it could well be that her faith may well be, in having just the one child. How did Paul know? that this was the quality



of her faith?

Well, read Genesis 21 and look what happened! You see, we read here in verse 7, 'and she said, who would have said unto Abraham that Sarah should have given (oh, look at it!) children suck?' She only had one! Isn't that marvellous? Look at that woman's mind, so she looked forward to breast feeding a whole lot of children. She only had one; and look at her age, so Sarah could see in that child that she was going to be the mother of many nations. Isaiah 49, 'they would suck the breast of princesses' and so Paul was able to latch upon that plural word and say that was the quality of her faith, that she would give children suck.

And she said in verse 6, 'she called him Isaac which means 'laughter' because she said, all the world will hear and laugh with me'; you see, they won't just laugh with her, they're going to hear first of all, won't they? and hearing, faith comes by hearing, doesn't it? and hearing by the Word of God, so people won't just laugh with Sarah because she had a child, they'll laugh because they've heard by the power of the Word of God which has generated in them faith, and they'll laugh for the same reason that she laughed; that Sarah will be the mother of many nations of which they, of course, will form a part!

Now we know the story, that when the time came to wean Isaac which was quite late in life really, according to their customs, (they weren't like in our modern scientific world which is so brilliant, they did things by nature) and the time came when that child grew, in verse 8, and we have, of course, Ishmael mocking the child. And we know the allegory of Galatians 4 that the son of the bondwoman would mock the son of the free woman, don't we, b&s? and it's interesting in the story that when Sarah demanded that Abraham cast out the bondwoman and her son, which would appear to be a rather drastic and unkind and cruel thing to do, God stood behind her! and Paul quoted those words in Galatians as 'what saith the scripture (not Sarah)'. What would appear to be harsh and unkind, b&s, Paul classified as scripture. I once read in a Christadelphian magazine in our country, an article where a sister had written an article extremely critical of Sarah of this incident, and painted it up as being one of the most unkind acts recorded in the Old Testament, and the article was quite extreme to that point, and how that she was totally wrong and against all the principles of God to do that. And Paul said, 'what saith the scripture'; be careful, b&s, of making judgments according to your emotional feelings. There was much more in that incident than meets the eye.

Verse 10, Sarah called Ishmael her son, 'cast out this bondwoman and her son; in verse 11 it says, 'and the thing was very grievous in Abraham's sight because of his son'. Ok? So Sarah sees Ishmael as her son, Abraham sees him as his son, and 6 times we've God's opinion of what he was! Six times God calls him 'the lad', the lad. Verse 12, verse 17, verse 18, verse 19, verse 20, six times He calls him the lad, in other words, b&s, the children, not all the seed of Abraham are children, that is, God doesn't count the seed from those who are born from the flesh, He calls them 'lads'. But Isaac was his only begotten son, there was the divine estimation of the situation if ever you wanted it. And we know the story, b&s, and I'll have to be quick now, you know, it's marvellous what happened!

Hagar wanders in the wilderness, and we went back to Isaiah 51 didn't we, when we read from verse 18, when the boy had fainted under a bush and she cries to Yahweh and He said, 'arise, lift up the lad and hold him in thy hand (remember Isaiah, 'stand up Jerusalem, arise, take him by the hand, thy sons have fainted' and there Isaiah was showing the barrenness of the bondwoman and her son, the inability of her sons to do anything for her, let alone for the world). Couldn't help his mom let alone anybody else, and his mom's got to stand up and take him by the hand. But God heard in verse 17 when Hagar prayed and cried unto God, in the end of verse 16, 'she lift up her voice and wept and God hear the voice of the lad'. He was listening to the cry of the boy, and Ishmael means 'heard of God', heard of God and in every instant of his life where his personal details are recorded, that's the context, being heard of God. Isn't that remarkable! because she represents natural Israel; God is going to eventually save natural Israel and she represented natural Israel.

Now Hagar in verse 14, is wandering, you see, in Beer-sheba; it says there in the end of verse 14, 'that she wandered in the wilderness of the well of the oath of the seven. The word 'oath' in Hebrew and the word 'seven' are the same basically, so to oath a person is to seven them. And here she is blind to that water; she can't see it, it's there and she can't see it. It's the well of the oath which deals with the everlasting covenant because only everlasting things are under an oath; nothing transient was ever sworn in, only eternal matters. And this is the well of the oath and it has to do with the promises made to the fathers; this is a symbol, b&s, of eternal life and she can't see that! And neither can natural Israel see it, but in verse 19, 'God opens her eyes, and she came to see where that well was', in other words, blindness only happened in part to the woman, until what? Now you listen to this, (ah, I love this bible, look) blindness in part has happened to Israel until what? until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in. So we read in verse 22, 'And it came to pass at that time', so while Hagar representing natural Israel is wandering around blind to the import of the promises made to the fathers, and God had to open her eyes; it happened at this same time, Abraham is making a covenant with Abimelech, and there's an argument about the well you see, which Abimelech's servants had violently taken away from Abraham; now Abimelech's in the wrong! and there's going to be some restitution made here.

And so in verse 27, 'And Abraham took sheep and oxen, and gave them unto Abimelech; and both of them made a covenant'. But verse 28 says, b&s, 'And Abraham set seven (sheba, Beer-sheba) seven ewe lambs of the flock by themselves'. Here comes another spring-board for the Law of Moses; the Law of Moses was not the original! all original is here. Here's a springboard for the Law of Moses, you go through the list of the sin offering, b&s, a bullock for the High priest if he sinned, a bullock for the nation if they sinned, a he-goat for the ruler if he sinned, turtledoves and pigeons were for the poor, and a handful of flour for the very poor (and I've missed one out!) A commoner, just an ordinary person, a female lamb; and the Law of Moses knew nothing of a male lamb for a sin offering, it was not there! You will never find from Genesis to Malachi anywhere, a male lamb for a sin offering anywhere, the closest you come is Isaiah 53 and that's a trespass offering. And it was waiting for the day when 'He comes

whose right it is, behold, the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world', something the Law never knew about, and was efficacious for things way beyond the Law! But for the moment, we've got here seven ewe lambs, and the Law of Moses for a commoner, and here for a king. For whose is the well? The king could have said, 'I'm boss around this place; I'm in charge here, I'm the king' and Abraham's got 7 ewe lambs set aside by themselves, that Abimelech might eventually come to the point of admission as to who's who around this place, and to learn, b&s, that he is after all said and done, in God's eyes, a commoner! And the tables are reversed here, aren't they? and Abimelech's come to realize that, and the Gentiles may have come from Ceasar's household; they may have been one who was the most excellent Theophilus, and there would have been others, dignitaries in the Roman world, b&s, but they had to get off their high horse like Naaman did, and get on ground level because they were but commoners in God's sight; and when they accepted that then God made a covenant with them, through Jesus Christ our Lord, not a ewe lamb this time, but a male lamb.

But here it's a ewe lamb and in verse 33, 'Abraham planted a grove in the well of the covenant or the oath, and called there upon the LORD, the everlasting God', and so while Israel's wandering in the wilderness, with water right underneath their feet, and they can't see it because blindness in part has happened to them, until God opens their eyes, it won't be until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in, and we all learn, b&s, that we are all said and done, but commoners, and submit to the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus our Lord, and admit that the wellspring of life is in the promises made to the fathers, and on that basis God will make Beer-sheba, the well of the seven, seven ewe lambs, the well of the oath, the covenant, and we'll be in covenant relationship with God. And when that is all filled up, then God will open the eyes of poor Israel, who's wandering today, still blind to that water!