

8672U

SOUTH AFRICAN BIBLE SCHOOL - 1997

ABRAHAM AND SARAH

Speaker: Bro. Roger Lewis

Study #7: Enjoying the son of their love together

Reading: Genesis 21:1-21

Thank you brother chairman, my dear brethren and sisters in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Last night, for those who were unfortunately absent, we found a most unlikely chapter in Genesis 20, which at first sight appeared to be another disastrous episode in the life of Abraham and Sarah; but we found proved to be finally, the turning point of it all, because out of this episode, we found, did we not? that Sarah finally reached the triumph of faith together with her husband. With the coming of faith, there now could come the promised seed! You'll remember that we found in Genesis 20 and verses 17 and 18, that Sarah suddenly realized with a flash of blinding inspiration, that the prayers of her husband could open wombs. If they could open the wombs of the house of Abimelech, then why ought not the prayers of her husband open her womb? The answer was, of course it could! she just hadn't believed, and her faith suddenly sprang to life, and we made the point that immediately after this incident in Genesis 21 verse 2, it said, 'that Sarah conceived', so clearly therefore, this the final episode in Genesis 20, was the key that brought her to the faith that she needed.

You'll notice, therefore, that Genesis 21 does start with that very significant word, AND, and the word 'and' tells us that there is therefore, a connection with the events of the previous chapter, doesn't it? 'AND she heard the prayer that opened wombs AND Yahweh visited Sarah as He had said; AND Yahweh did unto Sarah as He had spoken'. You know, the scriptures say, 'She judged Him faithful who had promised', when she finally came to the triumph of faith, she judged Him faithful who had promised. I think that 3 things impressed Sarah in coming to that measure of faith: I think she was impressed with the omniscience, the omnipotence, the omnipresence of God. Here they are! firstly you see, I think she was impressed with the angel who knew her secret thoughts, she was impressed by that! She came to a dawning realization, you see, of the omniscience of God, who knows all things. Secondly, I think she was impressed with the dramatic destruction of Sodom. You say, why? well, you see, the word El Shaddai can mean two things, can't it? the title El Shaddai can either mean 'the strength of the nourishers' (God as a nursing father) or 'the strength of the destroyers' (God manifest in judgment). As she pondered the mighty cataclysm that had obliterated Sodom off the face of the earth as El Shaddai, the strength of the destroyers moved

upon the face of the earth; if that's what the destroyers could do, then what could El Shaddai the nourisher achieve? and she was impressed by the omnipotence of God. I think the third thing that impressed her was the episode, of course, of Genesis 20, and of the wonderful way in which Yahweh again, in spite of their folly, lifted her out of that dreadful situation in Abimelech's house and showed His providential hand of care, to still be upon them. She now understood the omnipresence of God, He's everywhere, all seeing, all knowing! and she came to faith.

Now, do you see what the verse says, verse 1, 'Yahweh visited Sarah as He had said, and Yahweh did unto Sarah as He had spoken'? You know, there's a lovely cross reference in Luke 1 which we can turn to, 'Yahweh did unto Sarah as He had spoken', why? because faith had come, the faith that God had patiently waited for; and, do you see this interesting reference in Luke 1, in the words of one woman to another, also expecting a child. Luke 1 verse 45 are the words of Elisabeth to Mary the mother of the Lord, 'And Yahweh visited Sarah, says Genesis, and Yahweh did unto Sarah as He had spoken, as God had spoken', and Luke 1 verse 45 says, 'And blessed is she that believed, for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the LORD', do you see what the margin says? it says, 'blessed is she which believed that there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the LORD'. I suppose either translation isn't greatly different, but isn't the point of the verse that belief had to come first, faith had to come first, and then there would be a performance by God of the things that were told. So Luke 1 verse 45, is really our proof in Genesis 21 verse 1 that faith had come! she must have believed because now there was going to be a performance of those things that had been told to her.

Verse 2 says, 'For Sarah conceived', and we know, of course, and we saw last night from the record of Hebrews 11, that the apostle Paul says, 'Through faith Sarah herself received strength to conceive'; through faith she conceived, so faith now must have come and she implicitly believed within herself, together with her husband, that there would be indeed, a performance of the things that had been spoken to them. It's interesting actually, b&s, in this second verse, do you notice something? it's a remarkable thing, I suppose, in the experience of us all, but the second verse says that when God finally acted in the lives of the patriarchs, it uses this one phrase, it says 'that Sarah conceived and bare Abraham a son in his old age, at the set time of which God had spoken to him'. So you see, there wasn't any delay, was there? the child came at the set time! but God had already appointed; they thought there was a delay, they waited for 25 years, there wasn't any delay on God's part. The child came at exactly the right moment, and whatever the circumstances of life are that come upon us, b&s, I think we sometimes unwisely use that expression, that God has delayed! God's delayed His purpose, I'm not sure that God ever delays His purpose, does He? It's true that He shows long suffering to the sons of men, but finally, don't we believe that when everything occurs, it will occur in its due time as God has already ordained that it should? Actually there are some interesting words in a psalm which run this way! 'Thou shalt arise and have mercy upon Zion; for the time to favour her yea, the set time is come', that's Psalm 102 verse 13 and you see, Zion, Zion of the age to come, is

modelled on Sarah! Sarah is the type of Zion, who will one day wake up with joy in the age to come and find that she's surrounded by children, all begotten by the spirit of faith; and they will all come at the set time and there will be no delay! and God will reward the city of His love with innumerable children, all the operation of faith by the grace of God in their lives. We need to trust in the Father that the time of all things is in His hands; we're told in the New Testament, 'when the fullness of time was come, God sent forth His Son made of a woman'.

Now, do you see what the third verse says, it says, 'Abraham called the name of his son that was born unto him' (you know, I think we need to read verses 3 to 5 carefully here because you can almost see the excitement of dad here, just listen. Abraham is excited! oh, he's so excited; he's particular about everything that's going to be done here; just read the sense of the words) 'And Abraham called the name of his son that was born unto him, whom Sarah bare to him, Isaac. And Abraham circumcised his son Isaac being eight days old, as God had commanded him. And Abraham was a hundred years old, when his son Isaac was born to him'. You see, there's tremendous excitement in these words, isn't there? everything was going to be done, you see, by this couple, rightly and properly! Oh, they wouldn't overlook anything, every little detail concerning the raising of this boy would be done to perfection. He was going to be a son of 8 days in the matter of circumcision; they were anxious to ensure that they set this boy on the right course from the very first day of his life. You know, if ever you saw doting parents, I think it would be this couple in this chapter, enjoying the son of their love together!

By the way, you might not know this, but although all the titles for these addresses appear to be manmade, they are all based on scriptural ideas, everyone of them! That's a challenge to try and find them, isn't it? You know, 'Embracing the covenant blessings together', you know, in Hebrews 11 it speaks of Abraham and it speaks of Sarah and before it goes on to speak of the other patriarchs, it says they all saw the promises, received them and embraced them and he hasn't spoken about the other patriarchs yet, he's only spoken about Abraham and Sarah, they embraced the promises. You see, there's a scriptural overtone to that title, embracing the covenant. What about entertaining three angelic visitors together, well that's obviously Hebrews 13, isn't it? 'be not forgetful to entertain strangers'; where does the phrase 'Son of His love' come from? does anyone know? it is in the bible, shall I give you a clue? 'He has translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son', now where does that come from? does anybody know? Colossians 1, well done! and in the margin it says for the words 'dear Son' it says, 'the Son of His love'. And Isaac, of course, is a type of Christ, isn't he? very much a type of Christ; you see, in this 3rd verse it says, 'Abraham called the name of his son that was born unto him' you know, in Hebrews 11, do you know what Isaac's called? Isaac's called concerning Abraham, 'his only begotten son', and of course, that phrase is uniquely used elsewhere, of the Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son hath declared Him'.

But was Isaac truly the only begotten son of Abraham? Didn't he have other sons?

Hadn't he already fathered Ishmael? were there not other sons? but in a sense, it was true, wasn't it? that this boy was special! This boy came at a time when neither the father nor the mother could produce children; they were both quickened, it was a miraculous child, he was a special child, he was in a sense, their only begotten son; they never ever had another son like this one, b&s, never! He was a wonderful type of Christ, you see, and they were anxious to insure that everything they did in terms of the development of the son of their love, would be enjoyed by them to the full, as they guided him in every little step, so that he might indeed be a godly seed.

So, verse 6 says, Sarah said, God hath made me to laugh, so that all that hear will laugh with me'. Ah, isn't that lovely? remember, laughter's been an important part of the story, hasn't it? Remember the laughter of faith by Abraham in Genesis 17, and then the laughter of unbelief by Sarah in chapter 18, as she struggled, struggled to reach that same pinnacle of faith and couldn't. Well, she has now! and this time we have the laughter of joy, don't we? Sarah's laughter of joy! Of course, you know what 'laugh' is in verse 6, it's the word '*Isaac*', isn't it? 'God hath made me to '*Isaac*', so that all that hear will '*Isaac*' with me', and you see, this now is the laughter of true joy out of the heart and out of the mouth of Sarah. Sarah's laughter here is in contrast to her earlier laughter of disbelief, so now she makes a play upon her son's name, to indicate her laughter of sheer joy and gladness unto God, goodness unto her and unto Abraham. You see, this incident, this episode, we believe, forms the very basis of Isaiah's words in chapter 54 verse 1 when he says, 'Sing, O barren, thou that didst not bear; break forth into singing and cry aloud, thou that didst not travail with child', and the story of Zion singing for her children in Isaiah 54 verse 1, is all born out of the story of Sarah, who sang for joy on the occasion of this episode. I think Mary, when Mary sang for joy in the New Testament, I think she alludes, you see, to the words of Sarah when Sarah says, 'God hath made me to laugh, so that all that hear will laugh with me'. Do you see what Mary says in Luke 1, she says, 'My spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour', and you see, Sarah had said, 'God hath made me to laugh', Mary says, 'my spirit rejoices in God', see the parallel thought there? and then Mary goes on to say, 'for He hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden. For behold, from henceforth (and then look at this) all generations shall call me blessed', says Mary; and do you see what Sarah had said, 'all that hear will laugh with me', says Sarah. Oh yes, there's an echo there, and what a wonderful thing for Mary to echo with the birth of her child, but the laughter of joy from Sarah in Genesis 21.

I think that the laugh of Sarah here is the basis of the prophets words also in Isaiah 66, when he says, 'Jerusalem (who, of course, we're going to be told of in the New Testament, is the mother of us all, which is Sarah) it says, 'Shall I cause to bring forth and shut the womb? Rejoice ye with Jerusalem and be glad with her, all ye that love her. Rejoice with joy with her!' But did you see what Sarah said? she says, 'All that hear will laugh with me', she says in verse 6, and Isaiah 66 says, 'Rejoice with Jerusalem, and be glad with her and rejoice for joy with her'; 'all that laugh will laugh with me', says Sarah. Wonderful! You see, the bible's full of precious golden threads, isn't it? bible echoes echoing from place to place. I said in one of the studies with the young people

the other day, a rather nice statement; that the bible is full of golden threads woven together and the interesting thing about it is that 'you never know what else is going to move in scripture until you pull one of the threads, you see, and you suddenly find other passages that call out their echoes, from these words of Sarah, in her laughter of joy on this occasion.

In the 7th verse, Sarah then goes on to say these words when she says, 'Who would have said unto Abraham that Sarah should have given children suck, for I have borne him a son in his old age'. Now I want you to notice something interesting about those words! Imagine that you're Sarah, and that you now have a child in your arms that you've waited for, for 25 years. Now you see, you're cradling the child and you can just imagine what Sarah must have been like! here she is cradling this child and you can just see these words in verse 7. She looks down upon Isaac (and you know what mothers are like, they notice every little detail, don't they? They count the toes to make sure they're all there, and they press the little nose to make sure it works; they like to see all the little details, don't they? that's what women are like with children! Here she is cradling this son of her love and rocking him) and said, 'Who would have said, who would have said', (with the tears flowing down her face absolutely smitten with wonder at the sheer joy of that which they waited for until the principle of faith had arrived). Now if you were Sarah, in fact, you know what most women would have said? most women would have said, 'who would have said that Sarah should give a child suck!'; but she didn't say that, did she, she said, 'who would have said, that Sarah should have given children (plural) suck'? You see, I think that Sarah's mind had already seen beyond the child in her arms. Sarah's mind had already soared into the future and she saw a whole multitude of offspring brought into being by the same principle but from whence her son had been born, and that was the operation of divine power in their lives after the principle of faith. She saw that Isaac, her son, was just a prototype of a whole generation to come, all born after the same principle, that here is but the foundation seed and that there would be other children to come that would come into being through the operation of God's Word in their lives; that Isaac, this child of her love, precious though he was, beautiful though he was, was just the beginning, the beginning of a glorious seed that would all be counted as belonging to Abraham; 'who would have said that Sarah should have given children suck', remarkable words!

Oh this is a woman of faith! You see, what happens in this chapter is, now that Sarah has reached faith, she soars ahead of Abraham! Abraham is the one that's going to struggle in this chapter, Sarah is miles ahead of him! Oh, it's wonderful! Verse 8 says, 'The child grew, and was weaned: and Abraham made a great feast the same day that Isaac was weaned'. Now we're not told in the scripture when the children were weaned, but I think that we can postulate that 3 years old was probably a reasonably typical time for the weaning of a child. Two quotations to support that: in 2 Chronicles 31 verse 16, the genealogy is taken of those males counted responsible for entering into the house of God in order that they might discharge their responsibilities. The males were numbered says 2 Chronicles 31 verse 16, 'from 3 years old', and I think what was symbolic about that age, you see, was that it was a 'weaned' child, no longer on its

mother's milk; it was the time of weaning from whence they were counted in the genealogies. Here's another one and we might just turn this one up actually, 1 Samuel 1 verse 24, now of course, this is the presentation of Samuel and interestingly enough it's the presentation of Samuel to the house of God, which is exactly the context of the phrase in 2 Chronicles; the numbering was a genealogy for entrance into the house of the LORD; here in 1 Samuel it tells us about the presentation of Samuel, now just have a look at this in verse 24, it says, 'When she had weaned him, she took him up with her, with 3 bullocks, and one ephah of flour, and a bottle of wine, and brought him unto the house of Yahweh in Shiloh; and the child was young'. So Samuel had been weaned, now the record says in verse 24 that she took up with her 3 bullocks; (she didn't take up 3 bullocks, she only took up one) and the literal of the Hebrew is 'a bullock of 3 years' and the bullock represented the child and the bullock was 3 yrs old. Now let me show you what happened when they got there! because you see, verse 25 says, 'They slew a bullock and brought the child to Eli.' In fact, that's not quite right because in verse 25 the definite article is there, it should read, 'and they slew the bullock and brought the child to Eli', and that's not right either! We've got to read it even more carefully, we've got to get the emphasis right here, so watch my hands; 'And they slew the bullock, and brought the child, to Eli'. Do you see the parallel? You see, the bullock represents the child, the slaying of the bullock is the offering of the animal to Yahweh, the child is being presented to Eli for the service of the truth. See the parallel? and the bullock is 3 years old and the child is weaned; I think that's when they weaned them, you see! 3 years of age.

Now, coming back to Genesis 21, let's just see what happened then at the time of the weaning of Isaac, probably around about that time. That's an important date because we use that to calculate another age in this same episode. So in Genesis 21 then, we're told in the 8th verse, 'And the child grew, and was weaned: and Abraham made a great feast the same day that Isaac was weaned'. But you see, there was a problem in the household, wasn't there? because if Isaac was 3, how old was Ishmael? Well, anyone care to have a calculation on that? yes, he'd be 16 or 17, wouldn't he? because Ishmael in chapter 17 and verse 25 was 13 years old when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin. The child was to be born one year later, so when Isaac was born, Ishmael was 14; the child is now 3 years old, so Ishmael is now 17, isn't he? and for 17 years this boy, this lad, this son of Hagar has been used to running around the encampment as Abraham's son. In fact, as Abraham's only son, and now a little boy is about to displace him, already has displaced him in the affection of his father, and now at the feast of the weaning of Isaac, this little boy is about to displace a 17 year old, Ishmael, who's not very pleased about the whole matter. In fact, really the circumstances are quite reminiscent of Luke 15 verses 21 to 28; remember the eldest son on a later occasion who was bitterly disappointed at the great feast his father made for a younger son. Remember that? and the animosity and the bitterness of spirit of the elder son at the great feast for the younger son in Luke 15 is about to be manifested now in the household of Abraham.

Here it is, verse 9, 'Sarah saw the son of Hagar (notice this by the way) the Egyptian'

(she had never changed, this woman, she was always an Egyptian in her thinking), 'which she had born unto Abraham, mocking'. You see, I think those words are loaded with significance! Sarah saw the son of Hagar, the Egyptian which she had borne unto Abraham mocking', do you know what the word 'mocking' is? the word 'mocking' is 'Isaac', laughter. Ishmael was laughing, it's the same word, he was 'mocking' (6711), he was laughing. Now there's nothing wrong with Ishmael laughing is there? but the question is, what was the tone of the laughing like? and the answer is, I don't think the tone of it was very nice at all! I think, you see, it was the laughter of derision, and it's not too hard to work out what the circumstances of the laughter was all about. So, here again, is laughter in the story, but this time it's the laughter of derision and so the record states that Ishmael laughed, but that it was against Isaac is evident from the response of Sarah which follows. The AV translation of mocking must indicate the laughter of derision, intended to hurt; why would Sarah respond so strongly if it was a pleasant laughter, NO, it was something unpleasant, wasn't it? Look what Galatians 4 verse 29 says, 'this episode is cited in the New Testament as evidence of animosity between the two seeds'; Paul says in Galatians, 'But as he that was born after the flesh, persecuted him that was born after the Spirit', and he takes that out of the attitude of Ishmael to Isaac and he draws it from that verse. He that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, and it's not too hard to work out what the persecution was either, is it? because in the context of Genesis 20 and 21, it suggests that the basis of mockery was that immediately before the conception of Isaac, Sarah was in the house of Abimelech. I think what Ishmael suggested to this little boy was, that he was no special gift from God, but the son of an illicit union; 'you're not Abraham's son, we all know where your mother and father were, 9 months before you were born!' Can you see it? nasty, hateful, malicious, evil, spiteful insinuations concerning the legitimacy of the sonship of Isaac.

Isaac, of course, being a type of the Lord Jesus Christ, and if you don't think that's right, just have a look at this; in John 8, the identical taunt was thrown at Christ when discussing with the Jews on who really is the true offspring of Abraham. They turned to Christ in John 8 and said, 'We be not born of fornication; say we not well of thee, thou art a Samaritan! Do you know what a Samaritan is? A Samaritan was someone with mixed parentage, a Jew and a Gentile; and the very basis of Ishmael's mocking of Isaac on this occasion, I think, becomes the basis of the very taunt of the Jews in the New Testament as they cast dispersions on the legitimacy of the sonship of our Lord Jesus Christ. Oh what an echo there is here! that was a very, very serious thing for Ishmael to say!

Now you see, the question is, b&s, in terms of this 9th verse, what we have to asked ourselves is, why was Ishmael like that, and you might say, well, that's what he was like as a person. But you see, I think there's more to it than that! I think that one of the lessons of this chapter that's going to come out, and probably the main lesson, I think, of this chapter is to do with the influence of the respective parents upon their respective children. You see, I think the way Ishmael mocked Isaac was partly as a result of education by his mother. You see, I think Hagar inculcated that spirit into her son, that

spirit of resentfulness that Ishmael shows came from his mother, and she never, ever let him forget about it! It has happened, you know, in the truth, that someone has been punished or chastened because of some circumstance in their own life, and they've either left the truth, or worse still, stayed in the truth and sought to undermine it; but what they had then done worst of all, is that they have inculcated that spirit, their spirit, into the next generation and they've raised children who are imprinted with the same animosity, the same bitterness, the same chip on their shoulder about the ecclesia. This son of the handmaid was going to prove to be her son through and through, he wasn't Abraham's son, he was Hagar's son just as the angel had said, 'you will bear a son and you will name him; he will be your son through and through. So he was through and through! he was the product of his mother and of his mother's teaching.

So verse 10 says (and I hope you've got plenty of time, b&s, because verse 10 is a rather large verse, and it's going to take me the most of the rest of this study to get through verse 10). Verse 10 says, 'Wherefore Sarah said unto Abraham, Cast out this bondwoman and her son: for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, even with Isaac'. Now, there's a lot in this verse to think about, we're going to try and get through it as best we can! First thing is this, it would be natural enough, wouldn't it? it would be natural enough for us to imagine, but here is Sarah who for 17 years has borne the taunts of Hagar; she's borne the affliction of Hagar, and now her own son has been born and is weaned and is part of the household of Abraham and counted as his son. Now, how easy it would have been for Sarah to say in verse 10, with this spirit, 'you get rid of her!' Couldn't she have said that?' in other words, my time for revenge has come! How easy it would have been for Sarah to respond in emotion and petty spite and at last, to triumph over Hagar. Now, I don't think that's what Sarah said, and I don't think that's why she said it. Sarah was a woman moved by far, far higher principles than merely revenge, or spitefulness.

I'll tell you why we know Sarah's motives were of the highest purity, and I'll tell you why we know! We know because when the apostle Paul quotes this in Galatians 4, which we won't turn up, but you might like to take a note of Galatians 4 verses 29 and 30 (we're not going to look at it today, because God willing, we shall look at it tomorrow), but this is what Paul says when he quotes this particular matter in Galatians. 'As he that is born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now. Nevertheless, says Paul (now listen to these words), 'what saith the scripture'. Cast out the son of the bondwoman, for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the free woman'. Now do you notice what Paul said? Paul said, what saith the scriptures, cast out the bondwoman. But Genesis 21 verse 10 says, that wasn't scripture that was Sarah speaking; Paul says, NO! it wasn't, that was scripture'. Sarah's words are scripture, says Paul. So whatever the spirit was that motivated Sarah to say what she did, Paul says in Galatians 4 verses 29 and 30, that they were really the thoughts of God Himself, and motivated by the right principles; so was she right in saying this, by the way? is this a submissive spirit? Cast out the bondwoman and her son! well, of course, we should add shouldn't we? that submission is not required of a sister where it entails conflict with the laws of Christ. It's the same principle that we

teach, isn't it? for everything in life in terms of our conformity to the laws of the land, that we'll always conform to the requirements of the state, unless they conflict with the teaching of the Master. Submission is not required to the point where scripture itself must be broken, but you see, what I think we learn from this episode is that submission is not that a sister never communicates with her husband; and Sarah was a passionate woman with strong feelings, and she was prepared to speak her mind because she felt very strongly about this. So she lays forth her argument! she says to Abraham, 'Look, you've got to do this, you must get rid of both her and her son!' Now here's the question then, what would have happened if Abraham had said 'no'? and the answer is, Sarah would have submitted! She'd said her piece, she'd laid out her arguments, if the husband then had said 'no', then I guess they would have endured bitterness for a further time, perhaps until finally the husband saw the light and the truth of what she had said! But any sensible husband and any husband that loves his wife, will always listen very carefully to anything his wife says, especially when it's passionate; provided, of course, that wives are careful to exercise this, not all day, but there are times when a wife speaks and she feels very strongly, and when her husband appreciates that her feelings are that strong, he ought to pay attention to that, shouldn't he? he should listen very carefully to that!

But you see, we need to understand this, that Sarah's strength of feeling in verse 10, was not motivated by human passion. I think Sarah said what she said in this verse for 2 vital reasons and they're an illustration of the fact that her faith had taken her well ahead of Abraham on this occasion. Two vital things that caused Sarah to say the words that she did in the 10th verse: there was a matter of principle and there was a matter of practice, and both of those were important issues that would lead ultimately to the casting out of this bondwoman and her son.

First, the matter of principle, the matter of principle was this, that Isaac was the promised seed, and anyone that does not believe that Isaac is the promised son can have no part of Abraham's household. That's fundamental! anyone who does not believe that this is the promised son in which the promises will be fulfilled, can have no part of Abraham's household. Not only that, but it wasn't just the sonship of Isaac that was in question in terms of him being the child of Abraham and Sarah, you see, in a very special sense, Isaac was the child of God, wasn't he? he was as a result of the miraculous operation of God, and so to challenge the sonship of Isaac was to challenge his relationship to God and anyone who did that has no part of the household. Listen to these words, 'For as many as are lead by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God; for ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but ye have received the spirit of adoption whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself bearing witness with our spirit that we are the Spirit of God, and if children then heirs, heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with Him'. As many as are lead by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God, and if we acknowledge that principle, then we're heirs and joint-heirs with Christ. In Romans 8 verses 14 to 17, 'But if you do not acknowledge that principle then you cannot be an heir in Abraham's household'. You see, read the verse carefully! you see, you must understand this,

Sarah wasn't worried about Ishmael displacing Isaac, Sarah never felt threatened for a moment, that Isaac would lose his position. Do you see what she says? she says, cast out this bondwoman and her son, for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son'. There was never any question that Isaac was the heir, the only thing that Ishmael could ever have hoped for was to be heir with Isaac, never instead of him! But he cannot be heir with him either, if he does not acknowledge the sonship of the Spirit. If we do not acknowledge the sonship of Christ, we cannot be heirs with Him! So there was a matter of divine principle! You don't belong to Abraham's house, if you do not acknowledge the son!

I think there was also a matter of practice! and that is found in Proverbs 22, we might just turn to it, cast out the bondwoman and her son; you see, Sarah saw that there was a practical issue here as well, which I don't think Abraham had understood; but Sarah did, with all the clarity of a mother. It wasn't just a matter of principle, there was a matter of practice, or a practical reason, here; Proverbs 22 verse 10, 'Cast out the scorner, and contention shall go out; yea, strife and reproach shall cease'. Isn't that why she wanted the bondwoman and her son cast out? because you see, Sarah understood that they could never ever bring up Isaac in a godly environment when there were negative principles in that household of contention and strife and scorn and reproach. As long as Hagar and her son were in the household they could not raise Isaac in the godly way they wished to raise him. There were two different spirits in the household. It can't be done! says Sarah. So she says to Abraham, 'look, if you want to raise this lad in the way that I want to raise this lad so we develop the son of our love, in pureness of heart, to love righteousness and to hate evil, then you cannot have other influences in the household that detract from that. That's a principle worth thinking about, isn't it? In terms of whether we have one in our household, those things of the world in the form of literature, music, things on the wall, that are scornful and not spiritual principles; cast them out of your house, brethren! they don't help to provide a spiritual environment. That's what Sarah wanted, that's all she wanted, a godly environment in which to raise a godly seed and it could not be done with that woman there and that boy.

You see, coming back to Genesis 21, I think that Sarah actually understood the principle of Genesis 16, far better than Abraham. Genesis 16 had said, hadn't it? it's Hagar's son through and through, he's Hagar's son, he belongs to her! Sarah says, 'that's absolutely right, and the time has come for the son to belong to the mother and for them to be sent away. She understood the lesson of Genesis 16 far better than Abraham did! So her faith now has reached a point where she's not motivated by human emotional passion here, she's absolutely clear here on spiritual principles, she knows what she wants for the development of that child.

Verse 11 says, 'And the thing was very grievous in Abraham's sight because of his son'. It's interesting actually, see verse 10; 'Cast out this bondwoman and her son', verse 11, 'And the thing was very grievous in Abraham's sight because of his son'. Oh, can you see the tension going on here, can you see the tug, the pull? and that was the whole

problem, wasn't it? his son, her son, my son, their son, whose son, 'this son is our son, we keep him, that son is her son, he goes', says Sarah — that's scripture says Paul. Mind you, you can appreciate how Abraham felt, can't you? you know, this spirit of grief in Abraham's sight because of the son is the same grief that God felt when He cast His natural son out of the land. You see, the casting out of Ishmael is really a type of the casting out of natural Israel in AD.70 when they were scattered into the wilderness of the world. Wasn't God grieved when He did that to His natural son? Abraham still felt the sounding of his bowels for this boy, and it's interesting, you see, because verse 12 says this, you see, God's very compassionate towards Abraham, 'God said unto Abraham, Let it not be grievous in thy sight because of the lad, and because of thy bondwoman; in all that Sarah hath said unto thee, hearken unto her voice: for in Isaac shall thy seed be called. And also of the son of the bondwoman will I make a nation, because he is thy seed'. You see, God softens it for Abraham, He says, 'don't worry Abraham, I'll look after him for you'. But do you notice how careful God is, He says in verse 13, 'He says I'll make him a nation because he is thy seed', but He doesn't say he's Abraham's son, does He? He said, 'he is thy seed', and you see, that was the same thing when in chapter 17 Abraham cried, 'O that Ishmael may live before Thee', and God said, 'It's alright, I'll look after him, I'll bless him, I'll multiply him; but My covenant is with Isaac'.

You see, when God speaks to Hagar concerning her boy, do you know what He says to Hagar? He gives Hagar the blunt facts; He says, 'you're going to have a son, he's going to be a wild ass of a man (that's what it means in the Hebrew) no one will be able to teach him, no one will be able to handle him, his hand will be against every man, and every man's hand will be against him; he'll be hopeless!' But when God speaks to Abraham, He says, 'Abraham, I'll look after the lad'; actually do you see that word, it's very significant Do you see verse 12, God doesn't say to Abraham, 'let it not be grievous in thy sight because of thy son'. God doesn't call him Abraham's son, He calls him the lad, did you notice that? Now guess how many times Ishmael is called the 'lad'? Well, he's called the 'lad' in verse 12, twice in verse 17, once in verse 18, once in verse 19, and once in verse 20. That's 6 times, isn't it? he was a child of the flesh this boy, but in the words of Romans 11 verse 28, 'he was beloved because of the fathers' sake'. He was a lad of the flesh, but beloved because of the father's sake.

Verse 14 says, 'Abraham rose up early in the morning, and took bread, and a bottle of water, and gave it unto Hagar, putting it on her shoulder, and the child, and sent her away'. Can you imagine how desperately difficult that was for Abraham to do? I don't think it was difficult for him to send Hagar away, I think he was probably quite thankful for that; but it was very difficult for him to send Ishmael away. Can you picture that moment? he gave the bread and the water to Hagar, he brings Ishmael forward, he puts his hands on his shoulders, he says, 'good-bye lad, Yahweh be with thee', and watched the lad wander off into the desert, you see; now why did he do that? why did Abraham do that? Verse 14 says, 'he rose up early', by the way, and there's only 3 times in scripture where it ever says that Abraham rose up early. He might have risen early every day but there's only 3 times in the scripture when it says that he rose up early and he did that on 3 occasions when he was desperately worried about a person

that was close to him.

He rose up early in chapter 19 verse 27, to see what had befallen Lot in the matter of the catastrophe of Sodom; he rose up early in chapter 21 verse 14 when he had to send away Ishmael out of his life; and he rose up early in chapter 22 verse 3, when he had to face the prospect of offering up Isaac.

You see, he was an emotional man was Abraham, he was very close to the people he cared for; he stands for Yahweh in the story, doesn't he? who still has compassion for His natural son, the natural seed who were cast out of the land. You see, I think there's another reason why Abraham did what he did in verse 14; however hard, however difficult it may have been for him.

Oh, by the way, just another quotation! I'll tell you another reason why he sent them away, (don't turn it up, but it's from a chapter in 1 John which bro. David has already covered so I can safely refer to this verse, because it's behind us not ahead!) This is why Abraham sent him away, because 1 John 2:23 says this, now just listen to these words: 'whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father'. That's why! Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father, Ishmael denied the sonship of Isaac and he could not be left in his father Abraham's household. That's why he sent him away.

The other reason, I think, why Abraham did what he did in the 14th verse, no matter how difficult it was, this was (and pay attention!) this was his sacrifice for Sarah, don't you think? isn't that what he's doing? isn't he sacrificing for his wife? at great cost? Yes, I think that's what he did! Now brethren and sisters, I've run myself out of time and we're not going to be able to look at the rest of the story in the way that we wanted to; which is actually really fascinating. Perhaps I'll just give you a quick overview of the rest of the verses, which we really don't have time to look at, but let me just say this, there's a type being played out here! Ishmael represents the natural son of Israel, and Hagar as his mother, represents the Law; now you see, what happens in this chapter, is the natural son is cast out of the Land and is left to his own resources to be sustained by the Law. But in the end, you see, the bottle runs out because the Law could never sustain Israel, could it? The interesting thing about this is that verse 22 says, 'It came to pass at that time', and if we're to say what's that time? the answer is the same time as Ishmael the natural son is wandering in the wilderness, at that same time, Abimelech enters into covenant relationship with Abraham. Now Abimelech, you see, represents the Gentiles, doesn't he? he's a prototype, I believe, of Cornelius in the New Testament; so Abimelech who's a Gentile comes into covenant relationship with God. Do you see where they swear a covenant? verse 31, 'Where he called that place Beer-sheba; because there they swore both of them. Thus they made a covenant at Beer-sheba'. So Abimelech represents the Gentiles coming into covenant relationship with Yahweh the God of Israel; and at what time? at the same time that the natural son is wandering in the wilderness.

Now where was the natural son wandering? verse 14, 'they were wandering in the

wilderness of Beer-sheba. Now what happens is this, it's interesting actually! this well was dug by Abraham; they fought over this well. Abimelech's servants had stopped the well, the well had now been uncovered, the Gentiles have come to make covenant relationship with the God of Israel on the basis of the waters of life of that well, and the natural son is wandering in the wilderness and the one thing he can't find is that well. He's absolutely blind, isn't he? and while the natural son was fainting in the wilderness because he couldn't find that well, the Gentiles are entering into covenant relationship with God and Paul says in Romans 11 verse 25, 'This I say brethren, that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be brought in'. Do you know what happens then at the end of the story? we're told in verse 19, 'God opened her eyes and she saw a well of water; and she went and filled the bottle with water, and gave the lad drink', and at the end the natural son finally stumbles across the well, and Paul adds verse 26, 'and so all Israel shall be saved'. Oh, there's a parable here, isn't there? if only we had time to tease that out in a little more detail.

Let's just summarize with some thoughts concerning these two lads! both the sons of Abraham, but they both turned out to be completely different. Just a snapshot, you see, because there was no real marriage relationship here, was there? and because there was no marriage relationship here, this son, Ishmael, was the son of his mother through and through and not of his father. So concerning Ishmael we read, he was cast off by his mother in Genesis 21, he manifested the same resentful spirit of his mother in Genesis 21, he didn't cooperate with his father, he cooperated with nobody but himself says Genesis 16, and he manifested a completely different spirit to his father. This chapter says he became an archer (verse 20), Abraham was a man with domestic animals who knew the principles of pastoral care, as he cared for his sheep and his oxen; Ishmael was an archer, the thrill of the dice, the thrill of the chase, the prowess of a man according to his own abilities; resting his destiny in his own hands. He was a completely different boy to his father. This lad married out of the truth and got married to an Egyptian, and guess who arranged his marriage? his mother who was an Egyptian to the end! and she made sure that her son was married to an Egyptian. That's what that boy was like as a result of the environment that he experienced, with the training and influence of his mother upon him and a marriage relationship that ought to have been there, but unfortunately never was!

Now look at the other son by way of contrast! The son of their love that they were about to enjoy together! You see, this lad is completely different, isn't he? This boy cooperates fully with his father; he manifests the absolute faith of his father; he was deeply attached to his mother, he showed the same submissive spirit as his mother, and this lad was married, not only in the truth, but he married only one wife, he was born out of their unity of faith and oneness of mind. You know, b&s, out of all three patriarchs, Isaac is the only one that marries one wife; where did he learn that from? other than from the special marriage relationship of his father and his mother and their unity. Godly environments are what raises godly children and godly seed. In this story of Genesis 21, this tragedy had to really happen, didn't it? the casting out of the bondwoman, so that they could enjoy the son of their love together and raise him

properly according to divine principles.

God is able to perform in our lives all that He has promised. Indeed, the laughter of genuine happiness springs from His influence in our lives. We should rejoice in sheer wonder at what He has done for us! The flesh, however, does not comprehend the workings of the spirit, and shows antagonism to it. Abraham learnt that feelings must never override divine principles, and Sarah showed spiritual perception and practical wisdom. Children are well reared, when parents are well married. A godly seed is best nurtured in a godly environment.

These are some of the lessons from that wonderful chapter in the lives of the patriarchs when they enjoyed the son of their love together. In the words of a hymn with which we shall close, which we've already sung before, but how beautiful are the words:

And ye, His saints, rejoice,
His praises to declare
Whose mercy calls you from the dust
Their blessedness to share.

For soon He will reveal
Himself In His dear Son,
To seal the covenants of truth,
And perfect all in One.