

# 17-18 Bible Study #27

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# Genesis 19-22

# Genesis 19

- **Genesis 19:1-2**

- This story begins with a parallelism to the visit of God to *Abraham* in the previous chapter
- It was and remains a custom in the Middle East for a person as a matter of courtesy to ask a visitor if he would like some service or amenity
- The traditional response was, “no thank you, I am fine”
- Then the host would ask again indicating that he really wanted to offer the amenity and was not merely asking out of courtesy

# Genesis 19 (Cont)

- At that point the guest would respond that he would appreciate the offer
- We see that tradition in the dialogue between *Lot* and the Angels who initially responded that they would “sleep in the street”\*

# Genesis 19 (Cont)

- **Genesis 19:3-8**

- They finally agree, and *Lot* brought them into his house and provided a feast
- The trouble began when the men of the city arrived and demanded that *Lot* turn the men over to them
- The Hebrew word “*yada*” “to know” has several meanings based on context
- Here it means “to know” in a sexual way (*Adam knew [yada] his wife Eve*)
- *Lot's* offer of his daughters is certainly not a very positive step

# Genesis 19 (Cont)

- It is obvious what the men of the city wanted to do with these two men
- That is where the terms, “Sodomy” or “Sodomites” originates
- Again, we can see the importance of Middle Eastern hospitality which demands that when visitors or guests enter your house they must be afforded the protection of family members \*

# Genesis 19 (Cont)

- **Genesis 19:9-17**

- As the men of the city were about to break into Lot's house, the two Angels inflicted blindness on them giving *Lot* and his family an opportunity to flee
- This command to “flee to the hills” will come up again in the New Testament when Jesus warns his followers about the coming destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD (**Matthew 24; Mark 13; and Luke 21**)
  - Jesus was reminding his followers of what happened in this passage of Genesis
  - *Jerusalem*, like *Sodom* and *Gomorrah*, will be destroyed due to the iniquity of its people

# Genesis 19 (Cont)

- We also see a reference to God's mercy in the story of *Lot*
- Look at the similarity of language in **Genesis 18 and 19**
  - **Genesis 18:33** "The Lord went his way when he had finished speaking to Abraham"
  - **Genesis 19:29** "So it was that, when God destroyed the cities of the valley, God remembered Abraham" \*



# Genesis 19 (Cont)

- **Genesis 19:18-20**

- *Lot* complained that he did not have time for his second cup of coffee!
- *Lot* drags his feet throughout the entire process, “I cannot flee to the hills for it is too far!”
- **Zoar** is a Hebrew adjective for “small” or “insignificant”
- *Lot* seems to be asking for one more little favor, this little thing \*

# Genesis 19 (Cont)

- **Genesis 19:21-29**

- All the while *Abraham* was looking down on all of this
- He must have wondered what had happened to *Lot* and his family
- Therefore, the narrator of the story tells us what happened
- We see how God spared *Lot* and his family as a result of His covenant with *Abraham*
- *Lot* is being saved because of his relationship with *Abraham*\*

# Genesis 19 (Cont)

- **Genesis 19:30-31**

- Look at the ironic reversal of what happened here from what happened at the beginning of the story
- At the beginning all of the men of the city were surrounding *Lot's* house trying to get in and have relations with the two men
- To prevent this, *Lot* offered them his two daughters
- Now all that *Lot* has left, after his wife died for disobeying the angels, were his two daughters who are now living with him in a cave where there are no other men! \*

# Genesis 19 (Cont)

- **Genesis 19:32-34**

- This is a very strange story
- It looks like *Lot* got off pretty well after his bad move of offering two daughters to the men of *Sodom*
- But here he gets drunk and does not know what he is doing
- Again, the author does not condemn him for what he did, but the evil can be found in the consequences of his actions
  - Moab and Amon become among the worst enemies of the people of God
- Father pointed out that this is why we must read each story in the context of the greater narrative

# Genesis 19 (Cont)

- Notice the parallelism to the larger structure
- God is coming to judge a group of people who are in sin, and in the middle of the story, one man is going to be saved with his family
- Again, a parallel to the story of the flood (**Genesis 6-9**) in terms of destruction
- In fact we can even see the parallelism within the genealogies
  - We find the descendants of Noah in Genesis 10
  - Here in Genesis 19 we find the genealogy of Lot revealing the Moabites and Ammonites

# Genesis 19 (Cont)

- Another parallelism is between *Noah* and his family coming out of the Ark, we have the little story of *Noah* being drunk and his sons seeing his nakedness
- Some speculate that this is a violation of **Leviticus 18** resulting in incest
- Here again we see incest between father and daughters
- The major difference is that in the first story it impacted on the entire world and in this one only for two isolated tribes

# Genesis 20

# Genesis 20

- **Genesis 20:1-7**

- This is obviously another parallelism similar to what happened earlier when *Abram* went to *Egypt* and was afraid of the *Pharaoh* in **Genesis 12 & 13**
- He journeyed back toward the *Negeb* to a place called *Gerar*
- Also, notice that *Abraham* is referred to as a “prophet”
- A prophet was one through whom God spoke to the people
- He was also one who prayed for the people to God



# Genesis 20 (Cont)

- If we look closely at the text, we see that God is speaking to a non-covenantal individual (*Abimelech, the king of Gerar*)
- We know this because the author does say the LORD (all caps) for the divine Name in **Genesis 20:4**
- The RSV represented the Divine name Yahweh with LORD
- Here he just says “my Lord”, meaning my master or *Adonai*
- Then in **Genesis 20:6** we see “God” (*Elohim*) but not LORD \*

# Genesis 20 (Cont)

- **Genesis 20:8-18**

- *Sarah* must have been a very pretty woman
- Now we get an explanation similar to that in **Genesis 11**
- Since God was taking care and protecting *Abraham*, it does not appear that he had to go through this process everywhere he went
- This is another example of “man’s way” to solve a problem rather than trusting in “God’s way”
- *Abimelech* gives *Abraham* 1000 pieces of silver to get out of his country

# Genesis 21

# Genesis 21

- **Genesis 21:1-10**

- God fulfilled his promise to *Sarah* and she conceived *Isaac* (he who laughs)
- *Abraham* then circumcised *Isaac* when he was eight days old as required by the covenant
- *Sarah* stated that she had enjoyed the “joy (*Eden*) of being a mother
- Again, the old antagonism between *Sarah* and *Hagar* returned when *Sarah* saw the teenage boy *Ishmael* playing with the infant *Isaac*

# Genesis 21 (Cont)

- “Playing” can mean that he was: playing roughly with him, not being polite, being difficult or teasing (think of the age differences between the two boys)
- *Sarah* must have been a pretty good mother even at her advanced age
- The next story will remind us of **Genesis 16** where we first heard about *Sarah’s* anger with *Hagar* \*

# Genesis 21 (Cont)

- **Genesis 21:11-12**

- We must not forget that *Ishmael* was also *Abraham's* son and this problem exists in the first place because *Abraham* had listened to *Sarah*
- God told *Abraham* that since he had listened to *Sarah*, he must continue to listen to her
- The *Ishmael-Isaac* conflict continued throughout the entire narrative even though God had assured *Abraham* that his descendants would be named only through *Isaac* (**Genesis 17:19;21**)

# Genesis 21 (Cont)

- Father Sebastian said that it is critical for us to understand this promise so that we can fully appreciate what will happen in **Genesis 22**
- Even though *Abraham* had two sons, *Ishmael* will not be an option to solve his next dilemma
- Further, it was not possible that Sarah might have been able to give him another son because only *Isaac* could be the covenantal son \*

# Genesis 21 (Cont)

- **Genesis 21:13-21**

- Again, God told *Abraham* that he had heard his request (as in **Genesis 14**) when Abraham had expressed concern for *Ismael*
- God promised that *Ismael* would be the father of 12 tribes and would enjoy His blessing
- The significance of this whole *Hagar* issue was to remind us that “man’s way” will not succeed and that we must rely on “God’s way”



# Genesis 21 (Cont)

- At this point in the story *Ishmael* was 13 years old and circumcised
- Obviously *Hagar* was not carrying the lad on her shoulder
- It means that he was going along with her
- This is the beginning of the *Ishmaelites* \*

# Genesis 21 (Cont)

- **Genesis 21:22-34**

- At this point we briefly return to the character – *Abimelech*
- He and *Abraham* had a dispute over a well
- When we hear the language “God is with you” or “I am with you”, we are hearing “relational language” indicating the entrance into some sort of covenant
- Swear to me (*Shava*)
- These two men made a covenant with each other
- When you hear covenant, look for some reference to seven

# Genesis 21 (Cont)

- This can be seen as the “well of seven” or the “well of swearing” since both men “swore” to uphold this covenant
- This is know as the covenant of *Beer-Sheba*
- This is a great example of the play on words between the idea of covenant and the use of the number 7 in the text \*

# Genesis 22

# Genesis 22

- **Genesis 22:1-2**

- God called and *Abraham* answered
- How, as the text states can *Isaac* be *Abraham's* only son?
- What about *Ishmael*?
- Even though *Ishmael* had gone away, he was still *Abraham's* first born son
- Later we will see a similar situation when the brothers of *Joseph* (sons of *Jacob*) sell him to merchants who took him to *Egypt*
- As with this story, both situations were to “preserve life”

# Genesis 22 (Cont)

- What God did in this situation was to create a crisis for *Abraham*
- If he offered *Isaac* as a sacrifice on Mount Moriah, how would he have descendants as numerous as the stars?
- This was obviously a test of his faith
- At this point *Abraham* was living in the land of the *Philistines*
- *Mount Moriah* was one of the hills outside of a *Jebusite* village which eventually will become the temple mount of *Jerusalem* \*

# Genesis 22 (Cont)

- **Genesis 22:3**

- Look at the flow of this passage
- Abraham did not hesitate (as had Lot) as he rose early on the next morning and set out with the necessary provisions for the sacrifice
- Not only was he ready to comply, he did it as quickly as possible \*

# Genesis 22 (Cont)

- **Genesis 22:4-6**

- Unfortunately, we do not get a full appreciation of the drama in English
- In the *Hebrew* it says: “I and the lad (plural), will go, we will worship, and **we will come again to you**”
- All the verbs are in the first person plural
- But how was *Isaac* going to come back?
- Sometimes, in a story like this one, we must wonder how it is possible



# Genesis 22 (Cont)

- The New Testament often can shed light to help us understand how the first century Jewish Christians understood this story
- We see this in **Hebrews 11**
  - Father Sebastian said that the Book of Hebrews is a very beautiful epistle all about faith
  - According to the fathers of the Church, this chapter is one of the most beautiful chapters in the entire Bible
  - It can be seen as a summary of salvation history from the creation to the first century

# Hebrews 11

- **Hebrews 11:17-18**

- Notice *Abraham's* dilemma
- Many who read this story in **Genesis** believe that *Abraham* was willing to obey God because he still had *Ismael*
- As discussed earlier, that was not true as the author pointed out that *Ismael* was gone and *Abraham* did not know if he was still alive
- Thus, *Isaac* was his only option for having descendants
- We can see this as the author told us about it three times

# Hebrews 11

- Thus, *Abraham* only had one option which was based on his faith, squarely resting on reason (not fideism)
- *Abraham* knew that he could trust this God because whatever God had promised in the past had come to fruition
- But at that point no one knew for sure what was about to happen on the mountain
- *Abraham* knew who God was, based on what He had done in the past
- Thus, we can say that *Abraham's* faith was indeed based on reason

# Hebrews 11 (Cont)

- **Hebrews 11:19**

- Saint *Aphrahat the Syrian*, a lesser known saint of the Church, wrote an important commentary on **Genesis 22**, showing how the story was a type of the passion, death, and resurrection of Christ
- Many other fathers follow his lead in their writings
- Look at the imagery here:
  - Mount Mariah is in the region of Jerusalem
  - Abraham and Isaac traveled on a three day journey riding on a donkey
  - Isaac, who was going to be sacrificed, carried the wood for the sacrifice on his shoulders

# Hebrews 11 (Cont)

- Isaac seemed to go toward his death willingly because he knew the promises
- He shared the same faith with his father, Abraham
- In Jewish tradition this scene is call the “binding of *Isaac*” who went up the mountain not knowing what would happen\*

# Genesis 22 (Cont)

- **Genesis 22:7-9**

- God providing the lamb reminds us of the “Suffering Servant Psalm” in **Isaiah 53:7**
- *Abraham* was 100 years old and yet was able to bind his teenage son who had carried the wood for the sacrifice up the mountain
- Many commentators look at the passivity of *Isaac* as an indication that he was a willing offering, which they attribute this to his faith
- He believes that God could even raise a man from the dead
- Once again, look at the importance of this story for the New Testament \*

# Genesis 22 (Cont)

- **Genesis 22:10-19**

- The “Mount of the Lord” was *Mount Moriah*
- “I will bless you” goes back to **Genesis 12:1-3**
- The blessing of the nations through *Abram* in **Genesis 12:1-2** did not come through *Abraham* but through his seed, his descendant
- St Paul points out that the word descendant is “singular”
- That means that this blessing will come through one descendant in particular who of course (as discussed in **Romans** and **Galatians**) was Jesus Christ

# Genesis 22 (Cont)

- The name of the place, *Moriah* means “the Lord will provide” (it will come to pass)
- The Lord will provide “peace” as identified in the name Jerusalem (The City of Peace)
- Look at **Psalm 76:1-2**
- Scott Hahn talks a lot about this in his book
- The entire “narrative of *Abraham*” closes with this story
- Next we will move into the story of *Isaac*
- The *Abrahamic* section presented the foundation for the fulfillment of **Genesis 12:3 *which stated*** that it would be through the seed of Abraham that all the nations shall be blessed \*



# Genesis 22 (Cont)

- **Genesis 22:20-24**

- Just before we move on we get an amazing piece of genealogy that we will need to know as we are introduced to *Rebekah* in the next story