

Genesis 21:15-20 – He is Here

Reading: Gen. 21:8-20

King of Kings 20220102 Morning Services

Reading from the New International Version:

Genesis 22:1 Some time later God tested Abraham. He said to him, "Abraham!" "Here I am," he replied. 2 Then God said, "Take your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love, and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains I will tell you about." 3 Early the next morning Abraham got up and saddled his donkey. He took with him two of his servants and his son Isaac. When he had cut enough wood for the burnt offering, he set out for the place God had told him about.

What follows is Abraham about to offer his son back to God. God stops him and says, Now I know that you revere me enough to offer up your only son; so from now on I will bless you.

Now for a reading in the precious chapter, where Abraham faces a crisis with his other son, Ishmael.

Genesis 21:8 The child [Isaac] grew and was weaned, and on the day Isaac was weaned Abraham held a great feast. **9 But Sarah saw that the son whom Hagar the Egyptian had borne to Abraham was mocking,** 10 and she said to Abraham, "Get rid of that slave woman and her son, for **that slave woman's son will never share in the inheritance with my son Isaac.**"

11 The matter distressed Abraham greatly because it concerned his son. 12 But God said to him, "Do not be so distressed about the boy and your maidservant. Listen to whatever Sarah tells you,

because it is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned.

13 I will make the son of the maidservant into a nation also, because he is your offspring."

14 Early the next morning Abraham took some food and a skin of water and gave them to Hagar. He set them on her shoulders and then sent her off with the boy. **She went on her way and wandered in the desert of Beersheba.** (see map)

15 When the water in the skin was gone, she put the boy under one of the bushes. **16** Then she went off and sat down nearby, about a bowshot away, for **she thought, "I cannot watch the boy die." And as she sat there nearby, she began to sob.**

17 God heard the boy crying, and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven and said to her, "What is the matter, Hagar? Do not be afraid; God has heard the boy crying as he lies there.
18 Lift the boy up and take him by the hand, for I will make him into a great nation."

19 Then God opened her eyes and she saw a well of water. So she went and filled the skin with water and gave the boy a drink.
20 God was with the boy as he grew up. He lived in the desert and became an archer.

Introduction

Two worries are dealt with here:

(1) Imagine how Abraham worried about Hagar & Ishmael?

Isn't it touching how God appeared and answered their anxiety? He spoke to Abraham and told him that it was all right to let Hagar and Ishmael go. God would look after them.

Isn't that so wonderful of God to comfort Abraham like that? Is He not comforting you in the same way, saying, "Don't worry, I've look after you and I'll look after them."

How can I bring a child into this world?

How can we live in this country?

How can I release my child to this neighbourhood?

How can I do business here, in these stressful conditions?

How can I let my daughter go into the arms of her fiancée?

How can I face the sunset years of my life under these circumstances?

How can face this year when I have hardly recovered from the last one?

These are our Ishmaels – our worries and concerns.

I trust that you will be strengthened in your faith as you learn about God in this passage of Scripture, and what Abraham learned that led him to include this story in his legacy to us.

(2) Imagine how Hagar was worried about Ishmael, & her plight? As God did with Abraham, so again God showed up. If we think that God would only show up to a giant of faith like Abraham, we must be inspired with this truth about Hagar in her desperate plight. He also spoke to her. God showed up, and made it absolutely clear that this was not end, but the beginning. This was not a place of death, but place for God to be trusted.

Now see with absolute certainty the truth of this.

In this message may you know that God sees your anxieties and burdens, and puts Himself into them, as this Scripture passage shows He did to Abraham and Hagar. I trust you will find Him touching you and assuring you that He owns what you have been through, and what you face in the year ahead, and says to you

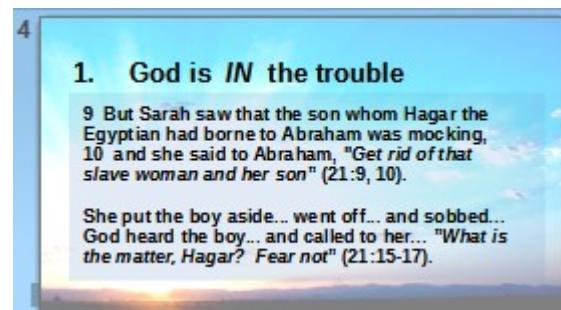
and to me that our future is in His hands.

Now you might ask, "What can I find in God that can enable me to let go of my distresses and groans and griefs?" Here is the first answer to that question: Know that God is in your troubles.

1. God IS here

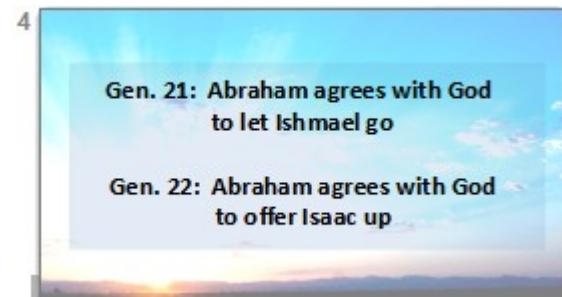
"9 But Sarah saw that the son whom Hagar the Egyptian had borne to Abraham was mocking,
10 and she said to Abraham, "Get rid of that slave woman and her son'" (21:9, 10).

"She put the boy aside... went off... and sobbed... God heard the boy... and called to her... 'What is the matter, Hagar? Fear not'" (21:15-17).



Abraham's distress and Hagar's desperation came from the same root cause. Ishmael had created a scene. He had mocked Isaac, alarming Sarah that her only son would not be the heir of Abraham. That was a very big deal in those days. So, she ordered the departure of Hagar and her son out of the household.

This chapter and the next must be taken together. Here Abraham finds that he must let Ishmael go, releasing him to Hagar and to an unknown future. In the next chapter, Genesis 22, God asks him to offer Isaac back to Him. In both cases, God is calling for Abraham to surrender his sons to the LORD. We dedicate our children to the LORD. But this is a principle for every part of our life.



Our Ishmaels are our plans and our ways of doing things. Sometimes our best plans and efforts bring about difficulties that are beyond our control. And these God is quite capable of handling. Perhaps you, like Abraham, may be comforted by God's Word to you: "Let your Ishmael go; leave him with me; I'll watch over what happens." This was Abraham's great consolation, as he released Ishmael and Hagar into the LORD's hands. Give God your Ishmaels.

Our Isaacs are our pride and joy, our miracles and our good fortunes, our dearest treasures and joys of our hearts. God asks for them too, as he asked Abraham for Isaac his dear and only son. Genesis reminds us that God holds claim to the things which cause us concern and the things which fill us with joy.

Here's the challenge. Genesis 21's call to Abraham to release Ishamel to God precedes chapter 22 where God calls Abraham to offer to Him Isaac. The point is this: **If you cannot trust God with your Ishamaels how will you trust Him with your Isaacs?**

God IS here, not only claiming what He has entrusted to us, but He is also in the middle of all that happens to us. This year is no exception.

The second part of this point is also to be noted. Let's look more carefully at what Hagar was going through, and how God was there for her.

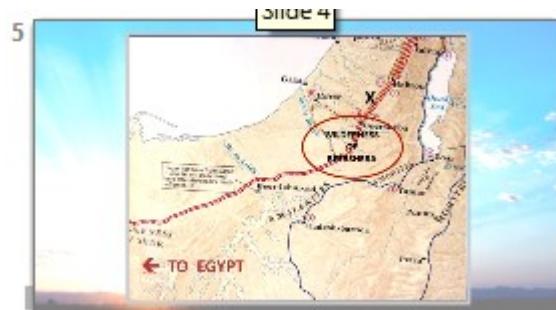
Hagar and Ishamael were sent on their way. This went south. They were facing death from lack of food and water. Hagar was in the deserts of Beersheba. She had either underestimated the water sources along the way, or she had lost her way. There was

a water source at Beersheba, and she probably had used it before on a previous journey (cf. Gen. 16). But now she could not find the water she had calculated on.

She was beside herself. The water she was carrying had run out.

Ishmael had collapsed and could go no further. He was dying and she was at her end. She put the boy

aside, and she moved out of earshot. She moved out of the centre and gave up. Upon reflection, as a result of Ishamael's misconduct they were now facing their death.



Have you ever been in a situation caused by yourself or someone else? You might not be struggling the way you are if circumstances had been different? There is encouragement for you here. If you face a new year staring hardship in the face, do not let the mistakes and events of the past determine your state of mind and heart in the present and its future. Let us look at God in the middle of a hard life, and at the beginning of a tough year.

In the middle of that disaster, was God! And in the middle of your troubles, when there seems to be no answer, is God!

> At the end of your tether is God! When we move out of the centre of our worries and distresses, there we find God, right in the middle! "God heard the boy" and He knew Hagar's despair. He knows the sound and sight of your burdens, and He knows your cry – He comes right into the middle of your breaking heart and speaks to you by name, as He did to Hagar: "What's the matter? Fear not!"

Now you may ask, "But how is God in the middle of what I am

facing?” What does He do?

2. God is HERE?

On what basis is Hagar to find calm? In this: God is in the distress in the following ways:

- (1) When God said, “What’s the matter, Hagar?” (21:17) the Hebrew word for “What’s the matter” is one word that a mother would say to a distressed baby. In our cultures we might hear the same idea in the form of “ShShShShSh” – It’s all right, it’s all right, I’m here, I’m here. The way a mother calms her baby, and brings it to peace – that is what God is doing here with Hagar. God in the middle of trouble is a consoling God – with mercy in abundance;
- (2) He also mentions her name. “Hagar” – He knows her, and she knows it! In this way, God comes to you and me in our challenges. He knows our names. That means that He comes to you and me in a personal way. He does not treat you as a case, in a way that an engineer treats a seized machine in a production process. In radiography, Bronwyn said that people were described by the problems they presented, for the sake of brevity and diagnosis: “Here is a foot,” or “Here is a lumber spine,” or “I must X-ray this chest.” No, when God calls your name, He is treating you as someone in relationship with Him – a person in His care and love. In our troubles we might do well to remember this.
- (3) Then God added, “Do not fear.” Have you heard your dog bark and said to it, “Stop that!” When God says, “Fear not” is He saying, “Stop that!”? No, He enters into your trouble and comes not only with comfort and consolation, but He comes with more

than that. His word, “Fear not!” is an act of power. “Fear not” is not something to do, it is something to receive. When God says, “Fear not!” He brings with His word the power to do it. He literally calms the distressed with His Word. He is not overriding you, but grants the grace that brings calm. Let our response be to receive Him in His gracious power. Does a person drowning fight the life-saver? Is it not better to quit the thrashing and yield to the saving arms?

Is not the name of the Lord Jesus the sum of “Fear not”? When Jesus’ disciples feared for their lives in the troubled sea, Jesus in the middle of their boat spoke with authority, “Peace be still!” His word to the storm was His word also their troubled hearts. And by that Word He did two things. When He spoke to the storm He calmed it and in that powerful Word He accomplished the same thing in their hearts! “Peace! Be still!” By His Word the storm ceased. And by His Word their hearts were calmed. By His Word He brought the cosmos into being. And by His Word He brings peace to your hearts.

Can you hear that word to you in your concerns, “Be still and know that I am God” (Psalm 46:10). He imparts to you the grace that calms your fears – it is not a cold instruction, it is God, who loves you so much, at work in the depths of your soul. It is Jesus calming your inmost being, drawing you near to Himself.

The hymn of John Newton puts it well,

“How sweet the Name of Jesus sounds in a believer’s ear; it soothes their sorrows, heals their wounds and drives away their fear. It makes the wounded spirit whole; and calms the troubled breast. ‘Tis manna to the hungry soul; And to the weary rest.”

This is God IN your trouble. This is God IN your 2022!
This is your consoling Lord, who draws you to Himself to work His peace into you.

Therefore, let us be clear about this point of God being in the middle of our lives: God is fully attentive to the situation and to what you are going through, and to what you are facing: “God has heard the boy crying as he lies there” (21:17); And when He hears, He hears with His heart. As it says, in Isaiah, “In all their distress He too was distress” (Isaiah 63:9). He knows what is going on, and He is here – here in it with you – the God of peace.

This comforting fact leads us to **how** God takes the matter in hand:

3. GOD is here

“Then God opened her eyes and she saw a well of water” (21:19).
(1) God limits the trial and distress – thus far, no further – Hagar had found herself out of house, and looking for a new home, partly because of Ishmael’s conduct; but God would not let that rejection thwart His purpose for both the mother her child.

Now, can you see that God limits what you have to go through. “Thus far” – The hand of God will not lead you where the grace of Christ will not keep you. He will keep His grace on your life until you see His wonderful face. And then you will know how much He watches over you now and forever! “Fear not!”

(2) They were lost, but God ensured that when they were at their end: **the very place where they gave up – and could go no further - was the place of His gracious provision and salvation** – they were at the water source that would save them.

Is it not true that right where you are, where you think that you are the result of miserable world gone wrong, that in this very place God can turn it for your salvation? They were at the very place of God's provision, though as yet they could not see it.

#A missionary family found themselves escaping from Zambia, as the war was breaking out in their area. They fled for their lives on foot towards the Caprivi. On the way, they ran out of water. They cried out to God to save them. It was like a Hagar and Ishmael moment. I heard the missionary tell us his story, in a chapel at Rosebank Union Church. He described their desperation, as they cried to God. That very moment, as they thought all was lost, the skies clouded up, and grew dark, and a thunderstorm burst upon them. They grabbed what pots and pans they had and collected the pouring rain, crying with joy and utter relief. They made it through into South Africa, saved literally by God's miraculous provision.

In your very circumstance, God can save you out of it. But can you see that God may save you IN it? He may make this place you find yourself in to be a source of life for your soul? How can we fathom the depth of His love for us? And right now He holds you closely to His heart.

(3) **God opened her eyes** to see the well that was there (21:19). God knows how to help you to see a way forward. And if you still move forward by faith, not seeing, you will find at the end that He led you all the way, and became your eyes to see. Trust Him.

(4) **God made the place of death a place of life:** "God was with the youth, and he grew, and dwelt in the wilderness, and became an archer;" (21:20) – the best place for Ishmael was there, not in

the soft tents of Abraham. And the best place for you is right where He has placed you. The last place God wanted Ishmael was in the old tents of Abraham. God had a purpose for Ishmael in the dersert. And so it is for you. God has a place for you right where you are. Ishmael thought his life was over. It was just beginning. In that very place where he was dying, God made it a place to grow. That is what the Scripture says. “God was with the youth, and he grew, and dwelt...” Do not long for the tents that no longer hang over you. Trust God to fulfil in you the way He graciously made Ishamel’s desert a home for which he was purposed. Praise God!

And for Hagar, it turned out that the desert became her freedom. God turned the disaster for good. And so He can for you. Let no rebellious heart arise to defy God and shake fist in His face. Let the sobs of sorrow be wiped away in the strong and rising faith that owns His goodness and trust His sovereign will. And then you will be rewarded with the pleasure of your Saviour when He affirms you before multitudes and before the Father – “This child of mine trusted me and now I hold this dear servant of mine high in honour, vindicated and to the glory of My Name!”

Application

Have you sorrows of your childhood? Can you now see God in the centre of them? Can you see that He comes with the Cross of the Lord Jesus Christ, and makes Heaven meet earth there.
Have you suffered physically, so that now you suffer the pain?
Have you experienced some accident/event that turned on you?
Have you a painful marriage experience?
Have you children who have broken your heart?
Have you landed with a circumstance that left you with regrets?

Have you been left unconsoled after some abandonment?
Have you found that you have had everything, except peace?
Have you had a good life, but have not known the love you
needed?
Have you had prayers that have not been answered?

It is so important to see from this passage of Scripture that God is not just there to make our future bright, **but to lead us to Himself that we may find in Him all we need. It is in Jesus Christ as Saviour that we find our first consolation.** All other peace is secondary. When we are at peace in our souls because we by faith have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, that is when we may face our troubles with peace of heart. Let us first cast ourselves upon Him that we may live in Him, then entrust to Him all we face.

Oh, that you may now see the Lord in the midst of it all.

The Lord has heard, and sees, and brings the consolation of His Word: “Peace, be still”; “Be still and know that I am God”; You are not forgotten; You are not ignored; He knows and understands what no one else does; His arms are already open to receive (1) your griefs; and (2) yourself.

Let go and let God have His wonderful way

Let go and let God have His way.