

Genesis Chapter 16 Commentary

1 Now Sarai Abram's wife bare him no children: and she had an handmaid, an Egyptian, whose name was Hagar.

We shall see in this chapter; Abram and Sarai did not really believe in God's promise, because they are going to take things in their own hands. Unbelief of God's Word is why we fail in living a true Christian life. We have a warning against this concept of unbelief in the New Testament.

- ***Heb 3:12 "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God."*** God is teaching us: Do not rely on the imaginations of our own hearts and sinful nature, which can only lead us into destruction and downfall.
- ***Heb 3:19 "So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief."*** God, here in Hebrews, is reminding us of those who in time past, Israel, who could not enter into the rest of the land of promise because of their unbelief. It is a warning to us to believe and trust in God and his promises.
- ***Heb 4:6 "Seeing therefore it remaineth that some must enter therein, and they to whom it was first preached entered not in because of unbelief:"*** God is reminding us: I have made a promise and I will fulfill it. He is telling us: I have made a covenant promise with God the Son; who has finished the work of eternal salvation for all my people, and has provided remission of sins for them. Therefore, they are justified by Christ in my sight, and they shall enter into the eternal rest. Likewise, Christ established a land of promise, the church of Salvation by Grace, on earth; and He will regenerate my people, and cause them to enter into this rest by the power of the Holy Spirit.
- ***Heb 4:11 "Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief."*** God is telling us: You have the power of the Holy Spirit dwelling in you; therefore, you are armed and able to give yourself wholly into trust in my promises. You are required to do something, which is to enter the land of promise, and do battle with the enemies that are occupying that land. Stand fast upon the testimony of my word of truth; put on the whole armor of God, and enter the land of promise in faithfulness.

2 And Sarai said unto Abram, Behold now, the LORD hath restrained me from bearing: I pray thee, go in unto my maid; it may be that I may obtain children by her. And Abram hearkened to the voice of Sarai.

Do you remember back in Genesis, chapter 10, we talked about the descendants of Ham (the one who was cursed)? The Hamites are the inhabitants of Canaan at this time and multiple wives is their practice. You see; the practice of disobedience to God, from before the flood, has not diminished.

We see here; Sarai is telling Abram to take up the ways of the world; and discard belief in the promise of God. We see Abram is willing to take the wrong path. How often do we take the wrong path, in many of the little things in life? For example: We tell jokes, even those that make fun of, or belittle God. We do things that we know are not what God has set down for us to do. It is called willful sin.

What Abram and Sarai should have done, in their despair, was to go to the Lord in prayer and supplication, seeking the right way for them to have children, and see the fulfilled promise of God. The

same is true so many times in our own lives. We look around and find the quickest, and what we deem best, flesh pleasing solution; and off we go into sin and rebellion against God. When what we should have done is seek God's direction, and guidance, and patiently awaited his right resolution of our problem.

Satan often uses those closest to us to tempt us to do wrong. What we must remember, when tempted, is that God is faithful to do all that he has promised. We must exercise our faith and trust in God, We must wait with patience for God to work things out in his own time and way. Likewise, when we know God has instructed to do something, we must act in faithfulness and do as God has said.

3 And Sarai Abram's wife took Hagar her maid the Egyptian, after Abram had dwelt ten years in the land of Canaan, and gave her to her husband Abram to be his wife. 4 And he went in unto Hagar, and she conceived: and when she saw that she had conceived, her mistress was despised in her eyes.

"*her mistress was despised in her eyes*" We see an immediate result of disobedience to God. As soon as Hagar saw she was pregnant; she despised her mistress. Peace and harmony in the house of Abram is destroyed. Secondly, Abram now has two wives, at the same time, which is against the teaching of God for mankind. Remember: ***Ge 2:24 "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife:***" Wife in God's commandment is singular, not plural as wives.

5 And Sarai said unto Abram, My wrong be upon thee: I have given my maid into thy bosom; and when she saw that she had conceived, I was despised in her eyes: the LORD judge between me and thee.

We see here a very good lesson of humanity in its undone state. It was Sarai's idea for Abram to have Hagar as a second wife. It was Sarai that arranged it; and when Hagar bore a child she despised Sarai. Now Sarai is blaming Abram for agreeing to do what she wanted. Two lessons we see:

- Our nature is to blame others when we make mistakes and mess up, especially when they agree and do as we asked. In hindsight, we say you should have known better; forgetting that we ourselves should have known better.
- Husbands; if you don't listen to your wife you will be blamed; if you do listen to your wife you will still be blamed. So, listen to your wife, but be obedient to God.

Eph 5:22-23; 22 "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. 23 For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the Saviour of the body." Now let's expound on this text to avoid misunderstanding.

"***Wives, submit***" does not make the woman a lesser person, but recognizes the pattern God established when He created man and woman. It simply means; recognize that God has put the man at the head of the family, and the burden of final decision is in his hand. Man is to exercise headship, and leadership, in teaching the whole truth of God in his household; so that error is not born out of ignorance of God's promises and truths.

Husband, as the family head, this does not mean that the woman is the man's slave or puppet. It means that the husband should have the eternal salvation of the wife and himself, in his heart and make leadership decisions, which will lead them both to walk in uprightness before God. It means he is

to walk before his wife and set the example; as Christ has walked before the church and set the example.

Sometimes, God may give the wife the right mind about something, and she should communicate that to her husband. The man should be cognizant of that, and take action accordingly; if it is according to God's promises and truth. Sometimes, the woman will act on her feelings and communicate these feelings to her husband. The man should be cognizant of that also, and should not take action as the feelings are not in accordance with God's promise and truth.

6 But Abram said unto Sarai, Behold, thy maid is in thy hand; do to her as it pleaseth thee. And when Sarai dealt hardly with her, she fled from her face.

Sarai sees her sin and compounds the sin by committing more sin. How? She rightly blames her husband for his sin of following her recommendation, which was not according to God's will. She now seeks her own vengeance against her handmaid, who now despises her. Sarai treated Hagar so badly that Hagar finally left. Don't we all do the same, look around for someone else to blame for our own sins? Instead of taking out the frustration of her own sin on her handmaid; Sarai should have come to God in humbleness; petitioning God to forgive, and to make things right.

7 And the angel of the LORD found her by a fountain of water in the wilderness, by the fountain in the way to Shur.

Let us note; Hagar is innocent in all that is happening. She has been obedient to her master. She is living as she was raised by the Egyptian world. **Ge 16:1 "Now Sarai Abram's wife bare him no children: and she had an handmaid, an Egyptian, whose name was Hagar."**

As we think of this; it is amazing to realize, that this Egyptian is meeting with God's messenger, his angel. It is just as amazing as realizing; we, who have been born again, have found favor in the eyes of God, and God communicates to us through the Holy Spirit.

8 And he said, Hagar, Sarai's maid, whence camest thou? and whither wilt thou go? And she said, I flee from the face of my mistress Sarai. 9 And the angel of the LORD said unto her, Return to thy mistress, and submit thyself under her hands.

"Return to thy mistress, and submit thyself under her hands." Hagar is instructed by God to return to her mistress; to her duty at home, and to submit herself to her mistress. We have a similar commandment in the New Testament: **1Pe 2:13-16; "13 Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; 14 Or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well. 15 For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men: 16 As free, and not using your liberty for a cloke of maliceousness, but as the servants of God."**

She was commanded to return to her mistress (notice it doesn't say husband) and do her duty; that she might receive a blessing. Reminding us; it is not always pleasant, to be about the Father's business.

"and whither wilt thou go?" We notice that Hagar does not give an answer to this question. This demonstrates to us; when we are in our natural, dead and alienated state; we have no answer to this same question.

10 And the angel of the LORD said unto her, I will multiply thy seed exceedingly, that it shall not be numbered for multitude. 11 And the angel of the LORD said unto her, Behold, thou art with child, and shalt bear a son, and shalt call his name Ishmael; because the LORD hath heard thy affliction.

"I will multiply thy seed exceedingly, that it shall not be numbered for multitude." God has surely done this; for many nations of the world are filled with the procreation of Ishmael. We find this promise being fulfilled from other scriptures:

- **Ge 17:20 "And as for Ishmael, I have heard thee: Behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly; twelve princes shall he beget, and I will make him a great nation."**
- **Ge 25:12-18; 12 "Now these are the generations of Ishmael, Abraham's son, whom Hagar the Egyptian, Sarah's handmaid, bare unto Abraham: 13 And these are the names of the sons of Ishmael, by their names, according to their generations: the firstborn of Ishmael, Nebajoth; and Kedar, and Adbeel, and Mibsam, 14 And Mishma, and Dumah, and Massa, 15 Hadar, and Tema, Jetur, Naphish, and Kedemah: 16 These are the sons of Ishmael, and these are their names, by their towns, and by their castles; twelve princes according to their nations. 17 And these are the years of the life of Ishmael, an hundred and thirty and seven years: and he gave up the ghost and died; and was gathered unto his people. 18 And they dwelt from Havilah unto Shur, that is before Egypt, as thou goest toward Assyria: and he died in the presence of all his brethren."**

Ishmael by definition means; *God will hear*. "**because the LORD hath heard thy affliction**" Do you remember; when the children of Israel groaned under the burdens of the taskmasters in Egypt? We see the same thing happening here, God, who is omnipresent, has looked down on the wrong being done to Hagar, and hath now come to deliver her.

12 And he will be a wild man; his hand will be against every man, and every man's hand against him; and he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren.

Wild means; *running wild, a wild ass*. What is said of the wild ass in scripture? **Job 39:5-8 "Who hath sent out the wild ass free? or who hath loosed the bands of the wild ass? 6 Whose house I have made the wilderness, and the barren land his dwellings. 7 He scorneth the multitude of the city, neither regardeth he the crying of the driver. 8 The range of the mountains is his pasture, and he searcheth after every green thing."** This is a good description of the wandering, lawless, freebooting life of the seed of Ishmael.

"and he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren" Do you see the picture; God's people, in the world today, are surrounded by those who are against us at every turn? We are surrounded by a people running wild and free, after the imagination of their own hearts and minds. Let us not forget; we were once in that same condition.

13 And she called the name of the LORD that spake unto her, Thou God seest me: for she said, Have I also here looked after him that seeth me?

"**Thou God seest me:**" Hagar recognizes that God has found her, in her wandering way, and God has looked upon her afflictions "**Thou God seest me:**" and saw her as one who has been wrongly mistreated. Hagar is saying; I am seen by God.

"**Have I also here looked after him that seeth me?**" I think we can properly restructure this phrase; I have seen God "**the angel of the LORD**" and I am still alive. What a great miraculous wonder. I have seen God and yet I live, and remember that God has seen me. I will be obedient to God and attend to my duty as He has commanded.

14 Wherefore the well was called Beerlahairoi; behold, it is between Kadesh and Bered. 15 And Hagar bare Abram a son: and Abram called his son's name, which Hagar bare, Ishmael. 16 And Abram was fourscore and six years old, when Hagar bare Ishmael to Abram.

Beerlahairoi has the definition of; *well of a living (One) my Seer*. Hagar knew that she had seen "The Living One" God Almighty. The same is true for us when we are born again. We now know; we are drinking from the well of living water, which issues forth from "the living one" our Saviour and Lord Jesus Christ.

We understand that Hagar returned and had the son as God had predicted. We know she returned because of the scripture "**and Abram called his son's name, which Hagar bare, Ishmael.**" Hagar returned to her home in direct obedience to God, and received the reward of her obedience.

We point out that this is not the promised seed to Abram. This is the son of the bond woman, which is demonstrated in the New Testament in: **Ga 4:22-31; 22 "For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a freewoman. 23 But he who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh; but he of the freewoman was by promise. 24 Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar. 25 For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children. 26 But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all. 27 For it is written, Rejoice, thou barren that bearest not; break forth and cry, thou that travailest not: for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath an husband. 28 Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise. 29 But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now. 30 Nevertheless what saith the scripture? Cast out the bondwoman and her son: for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman. 31 So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free."**

We see the same struggle going on today. God's people are surrounded by sin and ungodliness in this wilderness of sin in which we dwell. The point being: God may bless us very much in nature, but we are still sons of the bondwoman. However, when we are born again we are children of the freewoman, the true wife. We must be blessed with all spiritual blessings to enable us to recognize that we are the product of God's fulfilled promise. Hallelujah! Praise the Lord that we are grafted into the promise of God through the finished work of Christ our Saviour and Lord! Hallelujah! Praise ye the Lord!