

- Ishmael and Isaac (Gen 12:1-3, 16:1-3, 21:1-4)

#1. In Isaac Shall Thy Seed Be Called (Gen 21:8-13, 16:12)

- Twelve Nations from Ishmael (Gen 25:12-16, Acts 14:22)

#2. Isaac and Rebekah (Gen 25:20-26, Matt 15:13)

- The Seed of Abraham (Gal 3:16, Rom 9:6-9)

#3. This Is the Word of Promise (Rom 9:3, Eph 2:12, Matt 1:21)

- All Things Work Together According to God's Plan
(Rom 8:28-30, John 15:16, Phil 1:6, I John 4:19)

Please open your Bibles to Genesis 12:1 (3X). When Abram's father Terah died, Abram was living in Haran, in the land of Mesopotamia. Abram was 75 years old, and God came to him and said, Genesis 12:1 ¶ Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee: (i.e. Separate yourself.)

Genesis 12:2 And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: (I will give you descendants who shall become a great nation.)

Genesis 12:3 And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed. (Wow!)

Those words: "in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed" were the continuation of God's promise to Adam and Eve that God would send the Messiah, to end the problem of sin forever. In other words, God promised here that the Lord Jesus Christ would come out of the loins of Abram. Then God appeared four more times to Abram before we enter the scene in Gen 16. Please turn to Gen 16:1 (2X). Abram was now 85 years old. I am leading you through a quick historical review of:

- **Ishmael and Isaac (2X)** (Gen 12:1-3, 16:1-3, 21:1-4). We read in Gen 16:1,

Genesis 16:1 ¶ Now Sarai Abram's wife bare him no children: and she had an handmaid (female slave), an Egyptian, whose name was Hagar.

Genesis 16:2 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.

Genesis 16:3 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 (2X).

Abram was 85 and Sarai was 75 years old. She was beyond the age of childbearing. She came up with a wonderful plan that many aged couples today also come up with, and that is "adoption". Paraphrased she said to Abram: "Honey, you and I are getting too old to get children. Perhaps the Lord wants us to adopt a child and give this child all the privileges of one born out of you and me. Let us not just adopt any child. Here is my slave girl. You father a child with her and we are going to adopt this child as our own". That was very generous of Sarah. She was willing to share her husband with her slave girl. She was going to adopt this child from her slave, and pour all her favors upon this child, so that he would not be a slave, but she would give him a rich inheritance. But the price she paid, according to verse 3, was that she gave Hagar to be Abraham's wife. That Hebrew word has been translated most often "wife", and never "concubine". Well, 14 years later we enter Gen 17.

In Gen 17 God changed the names of Abram to Abraham, meaning "Father of many nations", and God changed the name of Sarai to Sarah, meaning "Princess", and God promised that Sarah would bear a son who must be named Isaac, meaning "laughter". And God said: "My Covenant will I establish with Isaac", not with Ishmael, but with Isaac. Now please turn to Gen 21:1 (2X).

Genesis 21:1-2 And the LORD visited Sarah as he had said, and the LORD did unto Sarah as he had spoken. For Sarah conceived, and bare Abraham a son in his old age, at the set time of which God had spoken to him.

Genesis 21:3-4 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.

At this time Abraham was 100 years old, Sarah was 90 years old, and Ishmael was 14 years old. Then three years later another incident took place where God repeated His promise. His promise was **#1. In Isaac Shall Thy Seed Be Called** (Gen 21:8-13, 16:12). We read in Gen 21:8,

Genesis 21:8 And the child grew, and was weaned: and Abraham made a great feast the *same* day that Isaac was weaned.

Ge 21:9 And Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, which she had born unto Abraham, mocking.

Genesis 21:10 Wherefore she 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.

Genesis 21:11 And the thing was very grievous in Abraham's sight because of his son.

Genesis 21:12 And 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.

Genesis 21:13 And also of the son of the bondwoman will I make a nation, because he *is* thy seed.

God agreed with Sarah that there had to be a separation between Isaac, the son of the promise, and Ishmael, who was the son after the flesh. Isaac was a child of God, but Ishmael was never saved even though Ishmael was circumcised, and Ishmael dwelt in the household of Abraham for 17 years. There Ishmael heard of Jehovah's promises to Abraham, and Ishmael heard that God hates sin and God will punish sin. Ishmael heard what happened to Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah and Zeboiim.

After Isaac was born Ishmael heard that Isaac was the son of the promise, Isaac was the son through whom God would establish His Covenant, and therefore Isaac was to be the progenitor of the Messiah. Isaac would be the bearer of the promise, "in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed". When Ishmael was mocking Isaac, Sarah perceived this as a severe insult, and it warned her of great conflict later in life. Therefore she told Abraham to cast out Hagar and her son Ishmael, and the reason she gave was, "for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son Isaac". She saw it now very clearly: God favored Isaac and God did not favor Ishmael, because God had not changed Ishmael. Ishmael was still blind in his selfish arrogance. She did not want Ishmael to be a coheir with Isaac of all the spiritual blessings that God would bestow upon the seed of Abraham.

This was very grievous to Abraham, because Abraham loved Ishmael. For 14 years Ishmael was his only begotten son. How could he then cast him out? But God backed up Sarah. And God said to

Abraham: "in Isaac shall thy seed be called". But for the sake of Abraham, because Abraham loved Ishmael, God would not forget Ishmael, for out of Ishmael God would also make a great nation. Therefore Abraham believed God, and the next morning Abraham packed a lunch for Hagar and Ishmael and sent them away into the wilderness, knowing that God would not let them die because of God's promise. And indeed, God did not let Hagar and Ishmael die in the wilderness. Ishmael grew and became a famous archer. He married an Egyptian wife and became the father of 12 sons and one daughter, whom his nephew Esau took for his wife. God prophesied in Gen 16:12 that Ishmael "will be a wild man; his hand will be against every man, and every man's hand against him". Is that the description of a child of God? Absolutely not! Isaac was an elect child of God, even before he was born, but Ishmael was a reprobate! God was never going to draw Ishmael to salvation. But now we have to ask the question: Are Ishmael and Isaac a special case in this matter of election and reprobation? The answer is that Jacob and Esau follow the same pattern. Is this how God operates in the process of saving His elect? The Bible says that God knows the names of all His elect. Does God also know the names of all the reprobates? Absolutely He does!

Please turn now to Gen 25:12 (2X). God did not forget His promise to Abraham about Ishmael.

- **Twelve Nations** descended **from Ishmael** (Gen 25:12-16, Acts 14:22)

Genesis 25:12 Now these are the generations of Ishmael, Abraham's son, whom Hagar the Egyptian, Sarah's handmaid, bare unto Abraham:

Genesis 25:13 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,

Ge 25:14-15 And Mishma, and Dumah, and Massa, Hadar, and Tema, Jetur, Naphish, and Kedemah:

Genesis 25:16 These are the sons of Ishmael, and these are their names, by their towns, and by their castles; twelve princes according to their nations (2X).

Ishmael is really prospering. Not only did he have 12 sons, but also they were called princes, and these were the progenitors of 12 Arab nations. And then God gave the names of these 12 nations. Why did God give us these names? Only one of them, Kedar, is mentioned throughout the Scriptures as a nation who dwelt far South of Judah. God gave us those names to indicate that God was faithful to His promise to Abraham, that for his sake Ishmael also should have a certain blessing.

Ishmael was physically prosperous, but Ishmael was never saved. Ishmael received much more of this world than Isaac did, but he received no grace unto salvation and no spiritual blessings from God. Spiritually speaking, Ishmael was cut off. All the material things that Ishmael received are not really blessings, because they will only add to his condemnation. God will say: "I gave you all these gifts, but you were never grateful enough to thank Me for it and to worship Me". God gave gifts to Ishmael, but these gifts were only of a temporary nature. These gifts were only of an earthly nature. The principal blessings that are valuable in God's sight must be given to Isaac. And these earthly gifts from God even

extend unto this day. Look at the rich natural resources God has given to the Arab nations in oil. What can we learn from this? If God will be known as firm and faithful in His Word toward those whom He considers as strangers, and toward those whom He considers as shut out and rejected from His body of believers, what then will He do toward us, which are His children, whom He has adopted and to whom it has pleased Him to show Himself near? Can God therefore fail His promises? That is impossible! Moreover, we must not only believe that God will lavish us with spiritual blessings, which are absolutely great and excellent, but we must also believe that God will not forget us in the necessities of our daily life. We must believe that there is nothing so small, in which God will not have some marks of His fatherly goodness imprinted. Let us not doubt that.

Therefore, when we see people prosper, we must not envy them for their material prosperity. God has far more favors to bestow on His children than on the unsaved. As long as we are on God's narrow road, meaning as long as we are doing the will of God and we are doing those things that are pleasing in His sight, we cannot be on the losing side. It is certain that God tests us in this life, and it is certain that we must go through trials and tribulations, but by the grace of God we will overcome.

Another thing that flows from this story of Ishmael and Isaac is that there are many more unbelievers in the world than there are saved people. Why is this so? At this point in time we can see that Abraham, and Sarah, and Isaac, and perhaps some of their servants, and Lot who dwelt in the mountains, were truly saved, but the rest of the world was in the grip of sin and Satan.

We can see this also in our day. We can see that most people on this earth have no fear of God before their eyes. Why is this so? Why did God want it this way? Well, we cannot speculate about people on the other end of the world, but the Bible gives an explanation for our immediate environment. For example we read in Acts 14:22 about this principle:

Acts 14:22 Confirming the souls of the disciples, *and* exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation (2X) enter into the kingdom of God.

This is a general principle: We must go through much tribulation! These are events that we do not appreciate very much. But these are events that God uses to teach us and to train us to be more faithful servants for Him. But, in order to inflict those sufferings on us there need to be many more unsaved people around us than there are saved people. This is one of the reasons why there are many more unbelievers in the world than there are saved people. Let us continue in verse 20 (2X),

#2. Isaac and Rebekah (Gen 25:20-26, Matt 15:13).

We read in Gen 25:20,

Genesis 25:20 And Isaac was forty years old when he took Rebekah to wife, the daughter of Bethuel the Syrian of Padanaram, the sister to Laban the Syrian.

Genesis 25:21 And Isaac intreated the LORD for his wife, because she was barren: and the LORD was intreated of him, and Rebekah his wife conceived.

Look at the comparison we find here in Genesis between Ishmael and Isaac. Ishmael is cut off, is

no longer among the children of God, and yet he prospers and he has a multitude of descendants. Ishmael was 14 years older than Isaac and Ishmael married at an earlier age than Isaac, and so Ishmael had already many children and grandchildren before Isaac even started to have children.

Now look at Isaac. Isaac waited until he was 40 years old before he married Rebekah. And then he discovered that his wife was barren. For 20 years Isaac had no children. This was enough to have him give up all hope. But Who held him tightly in the grip of Faith? God did! Isaac held on to the promises God gave to Abraham, that God would multiply his seed "as the stars of heaven and as the sand upon the seashore". And then we read that Isaac pleaded with the Lord for his wife when she was barren for 19 years. We should not get the idea that Isaac waited to plead for children only after 19 years. Isaac was a faithful believer, and we can count on it that Isaac prayed to God every day. This too was a severe test for Isaac, but God rewarded him after 20 years. We read in verse 22,

Genesis 25:22 And the children struggled together within her; and she said, If *it be* so, why *am* I thus?

And she went to enquire of the LORD.

Genesis 25:23 And the LORD said unto her, Two nations are in thy womb, and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels; and *the one* people shall be stronger than *the other* people; and the elder shall serve the younger.

Here was another severe test. Rebekah was constantly in pain because the children struggled within her. But the Lord's answer was even more painful than the physical suffering was. The Lord said: "Two nations are in thy womb, and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels". This means that the two children she was going to bring to birth were going to be enemies of each other. These two children would be the progenitors of two nations, which would be at war with one another. It means that they would be killing one another. And throughout their existence God decreed that the elder, Esau, shall serve the younger, Jacob. In other words, the blessing of being the progenitor of the Messiah that "in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed" would be passed on to the younger, Jacob, and God would bypass the elder, Esau. Let us read this here in verse 24,

Gen 25:24 And when her days to be delivered were fulfilled, behold, *there were* twins in her womb.

Gen 25:25 And the first came out red, all over like an hairy garment; and they called his name Esau.

Genesis 25:26 And after that came his brother out, and his hand took hold on Esau's heel; and his name was called Jacob: and Isaac was threescore years old when she bare them.

The title of this sermon is "**Isaac and Ishmael**". And the subject I am talking about is Election and Reprobation. We have already seen that God elected Isaac unto salvation, and God rejected Ishmael. Isaac was one of the elect of God, and Ishmael was a reprobate, who would never become saved. But here, in the immediate descendancy of Isaac, we see another set of this principle of election and reprobation: Jacob was one of the elect of God and Esau was a reprobate.

Think of this now as the beginning of God's church. The church began with Abraham. Look at how

God began His church, how God upholds His church, and how God multiplies His church. We tend to think it strange how God operates His church, and yet here it is. Now, 85 years after God started to draw Abraham to the land of Canaan there were only 5 members of this church, because Ishmael has been pushed out and Sarah died, and again there is contention between the children of God and the children of the Devil in the church. By the standards of the world this is ridiculous. Men would think that God does not care for His church. Don't you think it is strange how God operates His church? But actually this principle is very necessary for us today. How does God work in our time? For our part we are gossiped about, and we are despised and rejected by many. Many people call us a cult. They do not know the definition of a cult. They mock us that we are so few people. But God has given us an example in this story of Isaac and Ishmael. And God has given us a second example in the story of Jacob and Esau. God shows us here that He does not regard the great number of people in the church. As long as we perceive that we have the truth of the Gospel, then we are like Isaac, or like the hidden treasure that the Lord Jesus bought at a great price. And take now the person of Ishmael. He came out of Abraham's household, which at that time was the only church in the world. He also bore the sign of circumcision, as if he was an inheritor of the Kingdom of God. He was even the firstborn, but he mocked his brother Isaac, and by this he was known as a reprobate, one rejected by God. Compare this with the Church of Rome. They are no strangers to the Bible. They will say that they have antiquity on their side. But will they stand the test of the Sword of the Spirit? No! Particularly they fail the test of Rev 22:18-19, that you shall not add nor take away from the Word of God. They do not believe in the Gospel that we have heard, which is the seed of freedom, but they have corrupted themselves with the utterances of popes and saints. To us they are like Ishmaelites. They are great in number, and we are just a handful. But God has given us an example, that at this day we may not be ashamed. We must be content, and this should be sufficient to us, that we have a root in our God, that we live by His grace forever, that we are maintained by Him, that we are as a tree planted by the river's side which shall always be nourished there from. The Lord Jesus said in Matt15:13, "Every plant which my heavenly Father has not planted shall be rooted up". So let us not envy the children of this world. Let us witness to them the wonders of the Gospel of the Bible.

Please turn now to the Epistle to the Romans 9:6 (2X). God speaks here about:

- **The Seed of Abraham** (Gal 3:16, Rom 9:6-9)

Whom does God consider to be the Seed of Abraham? God says in Gal 3:16,

Galatians 3:16 Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy Seed, which is Christ.

Since God here defined His promises made to Abraham and his Seed, we are commanded to interpret the Seed of Abraham as Christ, and all the elect who were placed in Christ before the foundation of the world. No way are we allowed to understand all the physical descendants of Jacob

as the seed of Abraham, because they do not give glory to Christ, and they do not believe the entire Word of God. This conclusion is supported in Rom 9:6, where we read,

Romans 9:6-7 ¶ Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect. For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel: Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, *are they* all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called.

In other words, "Not all they who are the physical descendants of Jacob are called Israel in God's terminology". Verse 7 is even clearer: "Not all they who are the physical seed of Abraham are called children of Abraham in God's terminology". Historically the children of Hagar and Keturah were separated from the child of Sarah. Who then may be called Israel, or children of Abraham? The answer is Christ and all those who were chosen in Christ from before the foundation of the world may be called Israel, or the children of Abraham. These only are the children of the promise. Read verse 8

Romans 9:8 That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these *are* not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed.

Historically the children of Hagar and Keturah were the children of the flesh. We know that there is a minority of Arabs who became saved. They are physical descendants of Hagar and Keturah, and yet they are also called children of the promise. To whom then was the promise made? The promise was made to Abraham, but particularly to Christ, who is the Seed of Abraham. Verse 9 addresses this

Romans 9:9 For this *is* the word of promise, At this time will I come, and Sara shall have a son.

In other words, Sarah shall have a son, Isaac, who will be the ancestor of Christ. Therefore, "In Isaac shall thy Seed be called", and this is the word of promise, "In Isaac shall thy Seed be called".

#3. Why Is This the Word of Promise? (Rom 9:3, Eph 2:12, Matt 1:21)

Look at the context. The Apostle Paul says in Rom 9:3 (2X),
Romans 9:3 For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh:

In other words, his kinsmen according to the flesh were unsaved and were on the way to Hell. They too were in need of salvation. What about the Gentiles? We were worse off than the Jews. We were "aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world" (Eph 2:12). There is NONE righteous, no not one! We all were in need of a Savior who can save us from our sins and from the consequences of our sins. The Lord Jesus Christ is the only Savior there is. What was the word of promise to Abraham? The message was: I will give you a son. But what good does that to us? We also need that Word of Promise. God says: I will give you a Son, My Son, who is able to take away your sins and also the consequences of those sins (Matt 1:21). He shall save His people from their sins. But who are His people? They are all those chosen to be in Christ before the foundation of the world. It is clear from Rom 9:3 that "His people" may not be identified with the physical descendants of Jacob. O No! This Word of Promise was directed to all of

God's elect, who are the remnant chosen by grace from every tribe and nation and tongue in this world. But then, was God not aware that there would be other people in existence? Absolutely Yes! God even knows them by name, but God deliberately passed them by. God did not send the Lord Jesus to the cross to pay for their sins, because "He shall save His people from their sins"; only His people. The only ones going to heaven receive this glory as a FREE GIFT. It is a gift of God's grace. Now grace is defined as "unmerited favor". Since it is a favor that does not come to us on account of anything that we have done, or are going to do, the recipients of this grace are chosen by God alone. Since God does not decide this at the spur of the moment, because God is omniscient, God decided before the foundation of the world WHO would receive this grace. That is election!

This is the Word of Promise: "Sarah shall have a son", and "In Isaac shall thy Seed be called". In other words, from the loins of Isaac shall Christ be called and all those that are in Christ. This is how Abraham's seed shall be "as numerous as the stars of heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore". Christ shall take upon Himself the guilt of Abraham's sins, and Isaac's sins, and Jacob's sins, and my sins, and all the sins of all those whom He came to save. Christ paid for those sins the penalty that had to be paid, and He paid it in full, which means that He had to pay the equivalent of an eternity in Hell. This was the only way we, unworthy, dirty rotten sinners could be saved from our sins.

Thereafter God also directed our lives, so that at the right time God implanted a new soul in our bodies, which is a soul that has a fervent desire to turn to the Lord Jesus Christ, and to serve Him all our life. It is in this way that God made us aware of our salvation by Him, by giving us the faith to believe all that He has written in the Bible; the faith to believe God at His Word; the faith of Abraham. God knew exactly the right time that He was going to do that, and therefore:

- **All Things Must Work Together According to God's Plan** (Rom 8:28-30)

Please turn to Romans 8:28 (2X). Before the foundation of the world God worked out a plan, encompassing many thousands of years, to save all those whom He chose unto salvation, which are the elect, and God knew them by name. At the same time God also knew by name all those whom He was going to pass by, which are the reprobate who were going to die in their sins, and who will receive their just condemnation in Hell. God is not the initiator of our sins, but our sins are part of His plan, because of God's omniscience, which means "God knows the end from the beginning". If God would not include our sins into His plan, God's plan could not be executed. Our entire life consists of sins. There is nothing that we can do that is perfect by God's standards, and so all our sins are strung together by the historical framework of our life. For example: #1. God did not initiate the sin of Adam and Eve to eat from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, but God's plan included everything that flowed from that sin, including the promise of the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ. #2. Abraham's sin to father a son by Hagar was not initiated by God. But God's plan included everything that flowed from that sin, including the Arab nations who would do battle with Israel unto this day. #3. God did not

initiate the sin of Saul, the first king of Israel, but God's plan included everything that flowed from that sin, including the fact that He gave the kingdom to David, who was the ancestor of Mary, the mother of Jesus. #4. God did not initiate the sin of David to commit adultery with Bathsheba, the wife of his neighbor Uriah the Hittite. But God's plan included everything that flowed from that sin, including her second son Solomon who inherited the throne of David, and was the ancestor of Joseph, the husband of Mary. Therefore, there is nothing that we could offer to God that would be an incentive to God to save us. We read in Rom 8:28,

Romans 8:28 And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.

Romans 8:29 ¶ For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.

Romans 8:30 Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.

"All things" means all things that are in this world and all things that are happening in this world must be subservient to the purpose of Almighty God that everything must develop as planned before the foundation of the world. Nothing may slip by outside His plan, or else He would not be omniscient. And everything that happens must be to the glory of God alone. That is why God elects people unto salvation, and that is why God passes by others, who unquestionably are on their way to Hell.

The hymn we are going to sing, #387, reflects the first part of the theme of this sermon. The theme of this sermon is "election and reprobation". I cannot find any hymns that address the subject of reprobation. Therefore, here are the words that address the subject of election:

I sought the Lord, and afterward I knew, He moved my soul to seek Him, seeking me;
It was not I that found, O Savior true; no, I was found, was found of Thee.

The Lord chose me, He suffered and died for me, and He drew me to Himself. It was only afterward that I understood: "Ye have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you" (John 15:16)

Thou didst reach forth Thy hand and mine enfold; I walked and sank not on the storm-vexed sea;
'Twas not so much that I on Thee took hold, as Thou, dear Lord, on me, on me.

I walked in Thy ways, and did my utmost to remain faithful. Then I realized that it was not I who was keeping myself faithful, but by the grace of God I am what I am. "Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ". (Phil 1:6)

I find, I walk, I love; but O the whole of love is but my answer, Lord, to Thee!

For Thou wert long beforehand with my soul; always, always Thou lovedst me.

I love the Lord Jesus. My life is now dedicated to loving the Lord Jesus. I want to serve Him the rest of my life. But now I understand that "We love Him, because He first loved us" (I John 4:19).

Amen.

Let us turn to the Lord in prayer.