

Lessons from the Lives of Abraham And Isaac

**Growing Godly Families
Old Testament Series
Manual 2**

By

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Growing Godly Families Series

The “Growing Godly Families Series” is the result of weekly topics which were prepared and e-mailed over a period of years. This series is especially designed for those who are already Christian leaders; to give them Biblical principles for the development of additional godly spiritual leaders. Because they give Biblical principles for growth in spiritual leadership, they are also helpful for Christians that want to grow and become godly spiritual leaders.

Mark 10:43-45 says, “Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant. And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.” In these verses, Christ taught that godly spiritual leaders do not have the attitudes of leaders in the world. Worldly leadership is based on power and authority and is designed to benefit the leader and place him above others. In contrast, godly spiritual leadership is designed to help every Christian reach their full potential in Christ. The following three statements give a summary of three styles of leadership.

If we drive people, we will drive them until they can get out of our way.

If we lead people, we will be able to lead them as far as we have gone ourselves.

If we serve people, we will help each person develop their full God-given potential and equip each person for the ministry that Christ has prepared for every Christian.

In the world, people often measure success by the amount of things that they accumulate before they die. However, they are unable to take any of those things with them when they die. Mark 8:36-37 says, “For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?” Success produces rewards until we die, but it produces nothing for eternity.

In contrast, God measures effectiveness by our faithfulness and obedience. Matthew 6:19-21 says, “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” Effectiveness produces eternal rewards. Mark 10:29-30 says, “So Jesus answered and said, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My sake and the gospel's, who shall not receive a hundredfold now in this time--houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions--and in the age to come, eternal life.’” 1 Corinthians 10:31 says, “Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.” The Growing Godly Families Series is designed to make your life count for eternity by bringing glory to God.

Table of Contents

	Page
29. The Lord Reminded Abram of the Covenant	1
30. The Lord Signed the Covenant with Abram	4
31. The Lord Saw Abram Try to Fulfill the Plan of God	7
32. The Lord Told Abram to be Circumcised	10
33. The Lord Saw the Obedience of Abraham	13
34. The Lord Promised Sarah Would Have a Son	16
35. The Lord Heard Abraham Plead for Sodom	19
36. The Lord Warned Lot to Flee from Sodom	22
37. The Lord Showed Mercy to Lot	25
38. The Lord Showed How Sodom Affected the Daughters of Lot	28
39. The Lord Showed Further Sin of Abraham	31
40. The Lord Heard the Prayer of Abraham	34
41. The Lord Gave Isaac to Abraham and Sarah	37
42. The Lord Told Abraham to Cast Out the Bondwoman	40
43. The Lord Saw Abraham Make a Covenant	43
44. The Lord Told Abraham to Offer His Son	46
45. The Lord Provided a Sacrifice for Abraham	49
46. Abraham Wanted to Buy a Burial Place	52
47. Abraham Buried His Wife in the Cave	55
48. Abraham Sent a Servant to Get a Wife for Isaac	58
49. The Lord Led the Servant to the Family of Abraham	61
50. The Servant was Received by the Family of Abraham	64
51. The Servant Explained Why He Had Come	67
52. The Servant Returned with a Bride for Isaac	70
53. The Death and Burial of Abraham	73
54. The Birth and Early Life of Jacob and Esau	76
55. The Lord Told Isaac Not to Go to Egypt	79
56. The Lord Appeared to Isaac	82
57. Isaac and Abimelech Made a Treaty	85

The Lord Reminded Abraham of the Covenant

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn from the example of the way that Abram was learning to walk by faith. He had grown up in a family of idol worshipers so learning to walk by faith was a process that took many years with both failures and victories. The last topic showed ways he was learning to depend on the Lord and not be deceived by the deceptions of Satan. In this topic, we will see that God reminded Abram of the covenant that God had made with him.

Abram did not have any of the books of the Bible to read so that God could speak to him through the Word of God. As a result, God either spoke to him in person or spoke to him through things like visions. In these verses, we see that God spoke to Abram through a vision. God wanted to help Abram continue to learn to walk by faith and so after the events of chapter fourteen, God again spoke to Abram through a vision. Genesis 15:1 says, “After these things the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision, saying, ‘Do not be afraid, Abram. I *am* your shield, your exceedingly great reward.’” He began that vision by telling Abram three things. First, God told Abram “Do not be afraid.” The word translated “be afraid” is used three hundred and fourteen times in the Old Testament and is most often translated *fear or be afraid*. The first use of this word happened after Adam sinned and God came to him in the garden. Genesis 3:10 says, “So he said, ‘I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself.’” Here, we see that fear was one of five results of the original sin. The five were: separation from God, fear, guilt, shame and blame. Those are the things that have controlled mankind ever since. Here, God told Abram that he did not need to fear. God knows the hearts so he knew that there was a reason why Abram had fear in his heart. We will see that the question of Abram gave him the opportunity to tell God his fear in the next verse.

Second, God told Abram, “...I am your shield...” The word translated “shield” means *a shield or buckler that is used to cover over or to protect from danger*. The noun form is only used to speak of the protection by God from danger. This word is translated “defense” when David said in Psalm 7:10, “My defense *is* of God, who saves the upright in heart.” As a result, we see that God was making it clear to Abram that he did not need to fear for his life because God was his protection. Third, God told Abram, I am “...your exceedingly great reward.” The word translated “reward” is most commonly translated *hire or wages*. However, God says that He is more than just giving Abram wages. Instead, God said that He Himself was the exceedingly great reward of Abram. No wages could ever even be compared to this fact.

That led Abram to ask God a question. Genesis 15:2-3 say, “But Abram said, ‘Lord God, what will You give me, seeing I go childless, and the heir of my house *is* Eliezer of Damascus?’ Then Abram said, ‘Look, You have given me no offspring; indeed one born in my house is my heir!’” God had already promised Abram in Genesis 12:2, “‘I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing.’” As a result, the question in the mind of Abram is how can I be blessed by having a great nation come from me when I do not have even one child? In that time, the custom for those who had no children was to pass the inheritance to the oldest servant and his family. For Abram, this meant that if he died without a child his inheritance would go to Eliezer since he was the oldest servant of Abram.

Then, to explain that question in detail Abram went on to say, “Look, you have given me no offspring.” The word translated “offspring” is most commonly translated *seed* and speaks of wheat seed or some other seed that is planted in the ground. However, in part of the verses, it

speaks of children or future descendants. In Genesis 4:25, we read, “And Adam knew his wife again, and she bore a son and named him Seth, ‘For God has appointed another seed for me instead of Abel, whom Cain killed.’” In this verse, we see that Adam recognized the fact that God had given him Seth to replace Abel. In Genesis 3:15, we read, “‘And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel.’” In this verse, we see God promised Adam that a future descendent would defeat Satan who had spoken through the snake. That Seed was Christ. Abram told God that he needed to have at least one child if God was going to make a great nation from him. Otherwise, his servant would receive his inheritance because he had no family.

God gave Abram both an answer and an illustration to his question. Genesis 15:4-6 says, “And behold, the word of the Lord *came* to him, saying, ‘This one shall not be your heir, but one who will come from your own body shall be your heir.’ Then He brought him outside and said, ‘Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them.’ And He said to him, ‘So shall your descendants be.’ And he believed in the Lord, and He accounted it to him for righteousness.” God began the answer by saying that his servant would not be the one who became his heir. Instead, he would have a child that came from his own body. That would be the person who would be his heir.

Later, Abram did have several sons. God told Abram many years after the vision that Isaac would be the seed through which the blessing would be carried out. The first son was Ishmael. Sarah suggested that Abram have a son by Hagar, her servant. Genesis 16:4 says, “So he went in to Hagar, and she conceived. And when she saw that she had conceived, her mistress became despised in her eyes.” Then, Genesis 16:15-16 adds, “So Hagar bore Abram a son; and Abram named his son, whom Hagar bore, Ishmael. Abram was eighty-six years old when Hagar bore Ishmael to Abram.”

Thirteen years later, the Lord appeared to Abram. In Genesis 17:5, God told Abram, “‘...No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you a father of many nations...’” Then, God told Abraham that a son would be born to Sarah. Genesis 17:17-18 says, “Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed, and said in his heart, ‘Shall a *child* be born to a man who is one hundred years old? And shall Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear a *child*?’ And Abraham said to God, ‘Oh, that Ishmael might live before You!’” God did promise that Ishmael would be blessed and be very fruitful. However, God went on to say, in Genesis 17:21-22, “‘But My covenant I will establish with Isaac, whom Sarah shall bear to you at this set time next year.’ Then He finished talking with him, and God went up from Abraham.”

After the death of Sarah, Genesis 25:1-2 says, “Abraham again took a wife, and her name *was* Keturah. And she bore him Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak, and Shuah.” As a result, we see that Abraham actually had a total of eight sons. Ishmael was born to Hagar and Isaac was born to Sarah. Then, these six sons were born to Keturah. However, Isaac was the only son of those eight sons with whom the covenant was established. Later, the Lord appeared to Isaac and confirmed this promise to Isaac. God said to Rebekah, the wife of Isaac, in Genesis 25:23, “‘...Two nations *are* in your womb, two peoples shall be separated from your body; *one* people shall be stronger than the other, and the older shall serve the younger.’” Later, God told Isaac in Genesis 26:4, “‘And I will make your descendants multiply as the stars of heaven; I will give to your descendants all these lands; and in your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed’” Here, we see that the promise given to Abram in Genesis 15 would be fulfilled through his son, Isaac.

God then gave Abram a visual sign to confirm this promise to him. The Lord took Abram

outside and told him, “...Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them.’ And He said to him, ‘So shall your descendants be.’” Even with the telescopes that we have today, men can only guess at the number of stars that there are in the heavens. In contrast, God is able to call all of the stars by name. Psalm 147:4 says, “He counts the number of the stars; He calls them all by name.” As a result, God knows how many descendants Abram will have but no one on earth knows that number.

That is why it is so important to understand what God did when Abram believed the promise of the Lord. God “accounted it to him for righteousness.” The word translated “accounted” in this verse means that *God put it to the account of Abram that he was righteous*. Romans 4:3 says, “For what does the Scripture say? ‘Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.’” Romans 3:28 introduces the thought of this word by saying, “Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law.” The word is used forty-one times in the New Testament and eleven of those times are in Romans 4 where the entire chapter is speaking about Abraham to illustrate the fact that we are justified by faith. This word is also used of Abraham in Romans 9:8, Galatians 3:6, Hebrews 11:18 and James 2:23. As a result, sixteen of the forty-one times that this word is used in the New Testament point directly back to Genesis 15:6.

Romans 4:20-25 says, “He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform. And therefore ‘it was accounted to him for righteousness.’ Now it was not written for his sake alone that it was imputed to him, but also for us. It shall be imputed to us who believe in Him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, who was delivered up because of our offenses, and was raised because of our justification.” Here, we see that righteousness and justification are put to our account by God and not as the result of something we have done. Instead, justification was put to our account because of the righteousness of Christ. That is a very important lesson that we want to help our children clearly understand and be able to explain to others. Abraham illustrates this in both the Old and New Testaments. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to explain these things.

The Lord Signed the Covenant with Abraham

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain how the faith of Abram is used many times in the New Testament to show what it means for justification to be put to our account. In this topic, we will see that Christ made a blood covenant (eternal covenant) with Abram.

In the last topic, God had promised that a son would come from his own body and that through that son he would have more descendants than could be counted. Abram believed that promise. Then, God went on to say in Genesis 15:7-11, “Then He said to him, ‘I *am* the Lord, who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans, to give you this land to inherit it.’ And he said, ‘Lord God, how shall I know that I will inherit it?’ So He said to him, ‘Bring Me a three-year-old heifer, a three-year-old female goat, a three-year-old ram, a turtledove, and a young pigeon.’ Then he brought all these to Him and cut them in two, down the middle, and placed each piece opposite the other; but he did not cut the birds in two. And when the vultures came down on the carcasses, Abram drove them away.” Here, we see that God told Abram to prepare the sacrifices for a blood covenant.

In the Bible, we have three kinds of covenants. A salt covenant was in effect as long as the two people making the covenant were both alive. In Numbers 18:19, God gave a salt covenant to tell Aaron and his family that his priesthood would be lasting and endure. A second kind of covenant was a shoe covenant. A shoe covenant was in effect as long as the people making the covenant had any descendants. In Ruth 4:7, we have a shoe covenant. That verse says, “Now this *was the custom* in former times in Israel concerning redeeming and exchanging, to confirm anything: one man took off his sandal and gave *it* to the other, and this *was* a confirmation in Israel.” Mary and Joseph went to Bethlehem about twelve hundred years later because they were descendants of Boaz with whom that covenant was made. The third covenant was a blood covenant. A blood covenant was an eternal covenant. Here, in Genesis 15, God made a blood covenant with Abram. Christ said in Luke 22:20 at the Last Supper, “Likewise He also *took* the cup after supper, saying, ‘This cup *is* the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you.’” Here, Christ said that the cup was a symbol of the blood that He would shed on the cross the next day that would make possible eternal forgiveness and eternal life.

God reminded Abram that He had brought Abram out of the land of Ur to inherit this land. Here, Abram asked the question, “Lord God, how shall I know that I will inherit it?” God immediately told Abram to get the animals for a blood sacrifice to show that this was an eternal covenant. This included three animals and two birds. A three-year-old heifer is a female cow that has not yet had its first calf. Abram was also to bring a three-year-old female goat and a three-year-old male sheep (ram). In addition, he was to bring two birds, a turtledove, and a young pigeon. People who made covenants in that day would take animals and cut them in half and walk between the two halves. This was to show that they would be cut in half if they broke the covenant. Jeremiah 34:18-20 says, “““And I will give the men who have transgressed My covenant, who have not performed the words of the covenant which they made before Me, when they cut the calf in two and passed between the parts of it—the princes of Judah, the princes of Jerusalem, the eunuchs, the priests, and all the people of the land who passed between the parts of the calf—I will give them into the hand of their enemies and into the hand of those who seek their life. Their dead bodies shall be for meat for the birds of the heaven and the beasts of the earth.””” After Abram cut the pieces in half, the vultures tried to eat the carcasses and Abram chased the vultures away.

Genesis 15:12-16 goes on to say, “Now when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and behold, horror *and* great darkness fell upon him. Then He said to Abram: ‘Know certainly that your descendants will be strangers in a land *that is* not theirs, and will serve them, and they will afflict them four hundred years. And also the nation whom they serve I will judge; afterward they shall come out with great possessions. Now as for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried at a good old age. But in the fourth generation they shall return here, for the iniquity of the Amorites *is* not yet complete.’” Here, we see that when the sun went down, God put Abram into a deep sleep. This meant that only God would go between the pieces so that Abram or his descendants could not break this promise. In addition, God will never break His promise. In Malachi 3:6, we read, “For I *am* the Lord, I do not change; therefore you are not consumed, O sons of Jacob.” Here, we see that God told the descendants of Abram that they were not destroyed because He does not change.

While Abram was in this deep sleep, we see that God told Abram that it would be several hundred years before his descendants would possess the land. God said that first the descendants of Abram would be strangers in a land that was not theirs. They would have to serve the people in that land for four hundred years. The people of that land would also afflict them. In this way, God spoke of the fact that the descendants of Abram would be enslaved and suffer under the hands of the Egyptians for four hundred years before they would even possess this land. However, God said He would judge the people of that land for enslaving them. He would also cause the Egyptians to give them great riches when they left Egypt. Exodus 12:35-36 says, “Now the children of Israel had done according to the word of Moses, and they had asked from the Egyptians articles of silver, articles of gold, and clothing. And the Lord had given the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they granted them *what they requested*. Thus they plundered the Egyptians.” The Egyptians gave Israel these riches because the Egyptians wanted the people of Israel to leave their land quickly before any more destruction came.

God then told Abram that he would die in peace and be buried at a good old age. God also explained why his descendants would not possess the land immediately. God said that the descendants of Abram would return after they had spent four hundred years in Egypt because the sins of the Amorites and the other people in the land were not yet complete. Here, we see that God is a God of great mercy, even to the most sinful of nations. Among other things, the people of the land were offering their children as human sacrifices to their idols. God specifically warned Israel not to follow the actions of these nations when He said in Deuteronomy 12:31, “You shall not worship the Lord your God in that way; for every abomination to the Lord which He hates they have done to their gods; for they burn even their sons and daughters in the fire to their gods.” We see that the God was going to give the people then living in the land more than six hundred additional years to repent of their evil including human sacrifices before judging them for their sins.

Genesis 15:17-21 says, “And it came to pass, when the sun went down and it was dark, that behold, there appeared a smoking oven and a burning torch that passed between those pieces. On the same day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying: ‘To your descendants I have given this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the River Euphrates—the Kenites, the Kenezites, the Kadmonites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Rephaim, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Girgashites, and the Jebusites.’” Abram was in a deep sleep as God told him about the time when his descendants would take possession of the land. As he slept, we see that evening had come and it had become dark. Then, God appeared in the form of a smoking oven and a burning torch and he alone passed between the pieces of the sacrifices. This meant that only God signed the covenant so Abram and his descendants could not break the covenant.

God did later warn Israel what would happen if they turned from following Him. In Deuteronomy 28:41, we read, “You shall beget sons and daughters, but they shall not be yours; for they shall go into captivity.” They did turn to the idols of the surrounding nations and God did eventually take their children to captivity. However, there is still a future for Israel because of the promise in this covenant with Abram. Romans 11:25-26 says, “For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: ‘The Deliverer will come out of Zion, and He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob.’” Then, Hebrews 8:10-12 says, “For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. None of them shall teach his neighbor, and none his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.” The fulfillment of these promises is still future.

Noah placed a curse on Canaan and his descendants in Genesis 9:25 where we read, “Then he said: ‘Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants he shall be to his brethren.’” Then, Genesis 10:15-19 says, “Canaan begot Sidon his firstborn, and Heth; the Jebusite, the Amorite, and the Girgashite; the Hivite, the Arkite, and the Sinite; the Arvadite, the Zemarite, and the Hamathite. Afterward the families of the Canaanites were dispersed. And the border of the Canaanites was from Sidon as you go toward Gerar, as far as Gaza; then as you go toward Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboiim, as far as Lasha.” This is the land God promised to Abram and his descendants.

We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain that God showed great mercy to the descendants of Canaan and even here gave them six hundred more years to repent of their sin before bringing judgment on them. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to explain these things.

The Lord Saw Abraham Try to Fulfill the Plan of God

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain that God gave an eternal promise to Abram about the land of Canaan and signed that promise with a blood covenant. In this topic, we will see that Abram and Sarai tried to fulfill this promise by human plans instead of waiting for the plan of God.

In Genesis 16:1-5, we read, “Now Sarai, Abram’s wife, had borne him no children. And she had an Egyptian maidservant whose name was Hagar. So Sarai said to Abram, ‘See now, the Lord has restrained me from bearing *children*. Please, go in to my maid; perhaps I shall obtain children by her.’ And Abram heeded the voice of Sarai. Then Sarai, Abram’s wife, took Hagar her maid, the Egyptian, and gave her to her husband Abram to be his wife, after Abram had dwelt ten years in the land of Canaan. So he went in to Hagar, and she conceived. And when she saw that she had conceived, her mistress became despised in her eyes. Then Sarai said to Abram, ‘My wrong *be* upon you! I gave my maid into your embrace; and when she saw that she had conceived, I became despised in her eyes. The Lord judge between you and me.’” Here, Sarai and Abram give us an example of the fact that many people try to fulfill the plan of God in their own way.

Sarai and Abram had lived in the land of Canaan for ten years and they did not have any children. This meant that Sarai was seventy-five years old and Abram was eighty-five years old. Sarai decided that they should help God fulfill his promise of a son. Sarai had an Egyptian maidservant named Hagar. Sarai suggested that she and Abram get a son by Abram causing Hagar to become pregnant and then they could consider that child as their son. Abram agreed to the plan and got Hagar pregnant. However, that was not the plan of God and it has created conflict among the descendants of Abram right up to the present day. Many of the descendants of Ishmael are still in conflict with the Jews.

However, there was also an immediate conflict between Sarai and Hagar. When Hagar saw that she was pregnant, Sarai became despised in her eyes. The word translated “despised” means *to make light or to make lower*. This meant that Hagar no longer had the same respect toward Sarai because Hagar was able to get pregnant by Abram and Sarai had not been able to get pregnant. Sarai immediately felt slighted by this loss of esteem for her by Hagar. We see that Sarai felt hurt by this loss of esteem because she was no longer being shown respect by Hagar. As a result, Sarai complained to Abram. Sarai said that as soon as Hagar knew she had conceived, Sarai had become despised in her eyes. Then, Sarai blamed Abram for creating the problem and demanded that Abram judge Hagar for this lack of respect toward Sarai.

Abram did not feel that he had caused the problem because Sarai was the one who had suggested that she have a son by her handmaid. Sarai did not expect this change in attitude. As a result, Abram gave Sarai permission to do what she chose to Hagar because of this lack of respect that she was showing. Genesis 16:6-10 says, “So Abram said to Sarai, ‘Indeed your maid *is* in your hand; do to her as you please.’ And when Sarai dealt harshly with her, she fled from her presence. Now the Angel of the Lord found her by a spring of water in the wilderness, by the spring on the way to Shur. And He said, ‘Hagar, Sarai’s maid, where have you come from, and where are you going?’ She said, ‘I am fleeing from the presence of my mistress Sarai.’ The Angel of the Lord said to her, ‘Return to your mistress, and submit yourself under her hand.’ Then the Angel of the Lord said to her, ‘I will multiply your descendants exceedingly, so that they shall not be counted for multitude.’” We see that Abram allowed Sarai to do what she wanted.

The word translated “dealt harshly with her” means *to force or to punish a person in order to get the person to obey*. This word is used twice in Exodus 22:22-24 where it warns against mistreating the widows and their children. Those verses say, “You shall not afflict any widow or fatherless child. If you afflict them in any way, *and* they cry at all to Me, I will surely hear their cry; and My wrath will become hot, and I will kill you with the sword; your wives shall be widows, and your children fatherless.” In these verses, the word is translated “afflict” It is used in Exodus 1:11-12 to talk about the way that Pharaoh mistreated the descendants of Abram in Egypt. Those verses say, “Therefore they set taskmasters over them to afflict them with their burdens. And they built for Pharaoh supply cities, Pithom and Raamses. But the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew. And they were in dread of the children of Israel.” In these verses, it spoke of severe punishment to get the people of Israel to work harder.

When Sarai treated Hagar with severe punishment, Hagar ran away and headed toward Egypt as Shur was between the lands of Canaan and Egypt. When she got to Shur, Hagar found a spring of water and stopped by the spring. However, Hagar was not forgotten because we read that the Angel of the Lord found her by that spring. When the name the Angel of the Lord is used in the Old Testament, it is an Old Testament appearance of Christ. Exodus 3:2 says, “And the Angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire from the midst of a bush. So he looked, and behold, the bush was burning with fire, but the bush *was* not consumed.” Then, Stephen explained this verse in Acts 7:30-33, where we read, “And when forty years had passed, an Angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire in a bush, in the wilderness of Mount Sinai. When Moses saw *it*, he marveled at the sight; and as he drew near to observe, the voice of the Lord came to him, *saying*, ‘I *am* the God of your fathers—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.’ And Moses trembled and dared not look. Then the LORD said to him, ‘Take your sandals off your feet, for the place where you stand is holy ground.’” People do not seek for Christ but He seeks for us like a shepherd seeking lost sheep. That was also true in the Old Testament as Christ came to the place where Hagar was.

Christ asked Hagar where she had come from and where she was going. Hagar said that she was fleeing from her mistress Sarai. Christ answered Hagar, “Return to your mistress, and submit yourself under her hand.” Here, we see the same word that was translated “afflict” in the earlier verses. However, in this verse, it is translated “submit yourself”. Many people have the same attitude as Sarai had. She thought that she could get Hagar to submit to her by punishing her severely. That just stirs up greater rebellion and a person will either fight, flee or have great anger in his or her heart because someone is trying to force them to do something. In contrast, “submit” means *to place ourselves voluntarily under the leadership of another*. That is what Christ told Hagar to do and what He also tells us to do in Ephesians 5:21 where we read, “submitting to one another in the fear of God.” Then, in Ephesians 5:22-6:9, we have six illustrations: wives to husbands; husbands to wives; children to parents; parents to children; slaves to masters; and finally, masters to slaves.

Christ also gave Hagar a promise in her suffering. Christ said that her descendants would multiply so greatly that they would not even be able to be counted. Then, Christ went on to explain in Genesis 16:11-16, “And the Angel of the Lord said to her: ‘Behold, you *are* with child, and you shall bear a son. You shall call his name Ishmael, because the Lord has heard your affliction. He shall be a wild man; his hand *shall* be against every man, and every man’s hand against him. And he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren.’ Then she called the name of the Lord who spoke to her, You-Are-the-God-Who-Sees; for she said, ‘Have I also here seen Him who sees me?’ Therefore the well was called Beer Lahai Roi; observe, *it is* between Kadesh and Bered. So Hagar bore Abram a son; and Abram named his son, whom Hagar bore, Ishmael. Abram *was* eighty-six years old when Hagar bore Ishmael to Abram.” Christ told Hagar that she would have a son. He also told her that her son would be named

“Ishmael”, which means “God will hear”.

Ishmael became the father of the various Arab peoples. Christ went on to describe what Ishmael and his descendants would be like. First, Christ said that Ishmael would be a wild man. The word translated “wild” is translated “wild donkey” in the other nine places that it is used in the Old Testament. These wild donkeys are very independent and very aggressive. Many of the descendants of Ishmael still have these characteristics. Second, Christ said that the hand of Ishmael would be against every man and their hands would be against him. That also continues to be true today of many of his descendants. Third, Christ said that he would dwell in the presence of all of his brethren. Here, we see that his descendants would live in the same general area where the other children born to Abram would live in the future.

Suddenly, Hagar realized that she had personally met God. As a result, she gave a name to Christ. She called Him, “You-Are-the-God-Who-Sees.” Hagar realized that she had met the true and living God because she could see Him and talk to Him. In addition, she knew that He also saw her, came seeking her and was now talking to her. That is why she named the well “Beer Lahai Roi”, which means “well of the Living One who sees me.” Hagar had met Christ and knew that He cared for her personally. That was what made it possible for her to return to Abram and Sarai and place herself in submission to Sarai again even though Sarai had treated her harshly. This time she chose to submit herself to Sarai, instead of being in rebellion against any anger or harsh treatment she might receive from Sarai in the future.

Hagar did have a son and Abram called him by the name that Christ had told her that he would be named. That name probably had a very different meaning for Hagar than it did for Abram because of what had happened to her the day that she met Christ. We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain that Christ is the One who can help each of us learn to become submissive to one another. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to explain what it means to submit to one another.

The Lord Told Abraham to be Circumcised

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to understand and explain how Abram and Sarai tried to solve the problem of a lack of a son. Instead, they created future conflict for the descendants of Isaac. We also saw that true submission to one another is possible through Christ. In this topic, we will see that Abram had his name changed and was given the sign of circumcision.

Thirteen years had passed since the birth of Ishmael before we read that the Lord appeared to Abram again. Genesis 17:1-5 says, “When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to Abram and said to him, ‘I *am* Almighty God; walk before Me and be blameless. And I will make My covenant between Me and you, and will multiply you exceedingly.’ Then Abram fell on his face, and God talked with him, saying: ‘As for Me, behold, My covenant is with you, and you shall be a father of many nations. No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you a father of many nations.’” The first thing the Lord did when He appeared to Abram was tell him who He was. By this time, Abram was ninety-nine years old.

God began by saying, “I am Almighty God.” This is the first time that God calls Himself “Almighty God”. That name is used for God forty-seven additional times throughout the rest of the Old Testament. God told Abram to walk before him and be blameless. The word translated “blameless” is most commonly translated *without blemish* and was used of sacrifices. The word speaks of the Passover lamb in Exodus 12:5 where we read, ““Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year. You may take *it* from the sheep or from the goats.”” Proverbs 11:5 says, “The righteousness of the blameless will direct his way aright, but the wicked will fall by his own wickedness.” In this verse, we see that the blameless person is one who follows the Lord.

God reminded Abram that He would make His covenant with him and multiply him exceedingly. This was a reminder that God is the One who made the covenant and only God signed that covenant. In the topic on Genesis 15, we saw that God walked between the sacrifices while Abram was asleep. Abram fell on his face as God talked with him. Here, we see the attitude of worship and respect that Abram had for God. Then, God went on to remind Abram of the three parts of the covenant. However, right in the middle of those three parts, God changed the name of Abram to show the importance of the first part of the promise since the name change was based on that part of the covenant. God told Abram that his new name was Abraham. Abram means “exalted father”. In contrast, Abraham means “father of a multitude or father of many nations”. God then explained to Abraham what his name would mean in the future. Genesis 17:6-8 says, ““I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you. And I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and your descendants after you. Also I give to you and your descendants after you the land in which you are a stranger, all the land of Canaan, as an everlasting possession; and I will be their God.””

In addition to being the father of many nations, God promised Abraham that he would be exceedingly fruitful. Many nations and kings would come from his descendants. Here, we see that the covenant God gave to Abraham meant that he would have both personal blessing and that his descendants would have national blessing because they would become many different nations. However, this national blessing would actually affect all future nations. God had said

in Genesis 12:3, “I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.” The blessing of Abraham would bring blessing to all of the families of the earth. That was due to the fact that Christ would come from the family of Abraham. Because of Christ, Revelation 7:9 says, “After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands” This shows that the promise to Abraham included people of all nations, tribes, peoples and tongues. Every group of people on earth is blessed by this covenant.

The third part of the covenant also gave the land of Canaan as an everlasting possession to the descendants of Abraham. We will see in later passages that this part of the promise would be carried on through the family of Isaac. This is made very clear in Acts 7:5-6 where we read, “And *God* gave him no inheritance in it, not even *enough* to set his foot on. But even when *Abraham* had no child, He promised to give it to him for a possession, and to his descendants after him. But God spoke in this way: that his descendants would dwell in a foreign land, and that they would bring them into bondage and oppress *them* four hundred years.” Ishmael was thirteen years old at the time that God gave Abraham the sign of circumcision. However, the descendants of Ishmael were not in bondage to the Egyptians so God made it clear that this promise was to Isaac and his descendants.

God said that Abraham was now living in that land as a stranger. However, God said that land would belong to his descendants as an everlasting possession. Hebrews 11:8-10 says, “By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as *in a* foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker *is* God.” These verses tell us that the faith of Abraham caused him to look even beyond that physical land to the eternal city whose builder and maker is God.

Then, God went on to give Abraham a physical sign of that covenant. Genesis 17:9-14 says, “And God said to Abraham: ‘As for you, you shall keep My covenant, you and your descendants after you throughout their generations. This *is* My covenant which you shall keep, between Me and you and your descendants after you: Every male child among you shall be circumcised; and you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between Me and you. He who is eight days old among you shall be circumcised, every male child in your generations, he who is born in your house or bought with money from any foreigner who is not your descendant. He who is born in your house and he who is bought with your money must be circumcised, and My covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant. And the uncircumcised male child, who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin, that person shall be cut off from his people; he has broken My covenant.’” Here, we see that God gave Abraham and his descendants a physical sign as a testimony of their obedience to the covenant.

God told Abraham that he and all of his male descendants were to be circumcised as a sign and reminder of the covenant. The word “circumcise” means *to cut off*. Here, God said that all male children were to have the flesh of their foreskins cut off. God said that this was to be done to each male child when that child was eight days old. Circumcision is not related to salvation because salvation is always by faith. Galatians 3:5-7 says, “Therefore He who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you, *does He do it* by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? — just as Abraham ‘believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.’ Therefore know that *only* those who are of faith are sons of Abraham.” The descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are physical sons of the covenant but that does not

result in faith in the promises of God. Only those who are spiritual sons of Abraham by faith are also sons of God.

In addition to circumcising all of his male descendants, Abraham was told that he and his descendants were to circumcise any foreigner that was bought with money who was not a descendent of Abraham. In this case, these individuals would not be physical descendants of Abraham but would become identified with the descendants of Abraham even though they had originally been purchased as slaves. Their descendants then became a part of the nations that descended from Abraham. In contrast, those who become a part of the family of God are not required to be circumcised. That was the false teaching that some Jews taught in Acts 15:1 which says, "And certain men came down from Judea and taught the brethren, 'Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.'" That led to the Jerusalem Council.

At that Council, Peter said in Acts 15:8-11, "So God, who knows the heart, acknowledged them by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as *He did* to us, and made no distinction between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith. Now therefore, why do you test God by putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved in the same manner as they." The whole church stated their conclusion in Acts 15:28-29, "For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things: that you abstain from things offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well..." Circumcision is never related to salvation.

In contrast, circumcision is related to being a part of the Jews and other descendants of Abraham. Here, Genesis 17:14 says, "And the uncircumcised male child, who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin, that person shall be cut off from his people; he has broken My covenant." We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain that God made some promises to the Jews as a national people and other promises to the church and that we are not to confuse the two in our teaching. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to explain these things.

The Lord Promised Sarah Would Have a Son

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children understand the difference between the promises made to the descendants of Abraham and the promises that God has given to the church. The promises that God made to the Jews of national blessing will still be fulfilled in the future. In this topic, we will see that God changed the name of Sarai and promised her a son.

Genesis 17:15-18 says, “Then God said to Abraham, ‘As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her name Sarai, but Sarah *shall be* her name. And I will bless her and also give you a son by her; then I will bless her, and she shall be *a mother of nations*; kings of peoples shall be from her.’ Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed, and said in his heart, ‘Shall *a child* be born to a man who is one hundred years old? And shall Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear *a child*?’ And Abraham said to God, ‘Oh, that Ishmael might live before You!’” “Sarai” means *my princess* while “Sarah” means *princess or noblewoman*. Instead of just being the princess of one nation, the promise of God to Abraham meant that she would be the mother and princess of many nations.

God promised to bless Sarah and give Abraham a son by Sarah. This blessing included the fact that she would become a mother of nations and that kings of nations would come from her. This promise came as a shock to Abraham because he had been married to Sarah for many years and Sarah had not had any children. Now, God promised that she would have a son in her old age and that nations would come from this son. We see that this was such a shock to Abraham that he fell on his face and laughed. God had promised him twice before that he would be a father but God had never said that Sarah would be a mother. The reason that Abraham fell on his face and laughed was due to the fact of the age of Abraham and Sarah. At that time, Abraham was ninety-nine years old and Sarah was eighty-nine years old. This meant that he would be a hundred years old and Sarah would be ninety years old when the son would be born. That sounded like something impossible to Abraham.

As a result, Abraham said to God, “Oh, that Ishmael might live before You!” At first, it was an idea beyond his imagination that Sarah would give birth to a son. However, Romans 4:16-22 says, “Therefore *it is* of faith that it *might* be according to grace, so that the promise might be sure to all the seed, not only to those who are of the law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all (as it is written, ‘I have made you a father of many nations’) in the presence of Him whom he believed—God, who gives life to the dead and calls those things which do not exist as though they did; who, contrary to hope, in hope believed, so that he became the father of many nations, according to what was spoken, ‘So shall your descendants be.’ And not being weak in faith, he did not consider his own body, already dead (since he was about a hundred years old), and the deadness of Sarah’s womb. He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform. And therefore ‘it was accounted to him for righteousness.’” This is the event that was placed to the account of Abraham as righteousness. Abraham believed what God had promised.

God promised to bless the descendants of both Isaac and Ishmael. Genesis 17:19-22 says, “Then God said: ‘No, Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac; I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, *and* with his descendants after him. And as for Ishmael, I have heard you. Behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly. He shall beget twelve princes, and I will make him

a great nation. But My covenant I will establish with Isaac, whom Sarah shall bear to you at this set time next year.’ Then He finished talking with him, and God went up from Abraham.” God told Abraham about the son that Sarah would bear first. God said that they were to name that son “Isaac”, which means *he laughs*. This was to remind Abraham that he had laughed in his heart.

God went on to say that He would establish His everlasting covenant with Isaac and the descendants of Isaac. Later, God told Abraham again in Genesis 21:12-13, “But God said to Abraham, ‘Do not let it be displeasing in your sight because of the lad or because of your bondwoman. Whatever Sarah has said to you, listen to her voice; for in Isaac your seed shall be called. Yet I will also make a nation of the son of the bondwoman, because he is your seed.’” In this promise to Abraham, God again told him that Isaac was the one who would carry on the blessing regarding the seed (Christ). At the same time, God also reminded Abraham that he would make a nation of the son of the bondwoman. God had a promise for each of the sons that He was going to keep.

Then, God said that He had heard the statement of Abraham when he said, “Oh, that Ishmael might live before You!” God gave Abraham several promises about Ishmael. God said that He had blessed Ishmael. God said that as a result of that blessing, He would make Ishmael very fruitful. In fact, God said that He would cause the descendants of Ishmael to multiply exceedingly. Then, he said that Ishmael would beget twelve princes. Ishmael later had twelve sons and God said here that each of them would be a prince. God did choose to honor the request of Abraham that He would bless Ishmael.

At the same time, God made it clear that Isaac would be the one with whom God would fulfill His covenant. That meant the blessing that God had given to Abraham would be passed on to the family of Isaac. That blessing included the land, personal blessing, blessing of the nation of Israel and the fact that the Christ who would bring blessing to all families on the earth would come through the family of Isaac. God also said that the birth of Isaac would happen at the appointed time the next year. God had finished talking with Abraham and telling him what He was planning to do. After God had finished talking, he went up from Abraham.

We go on to read in Genesis 17:23-27, “So Abraham took Ishmael his son, all who were born in his house and all who were bought with his money, every male among the men of Abraham’s house, and circumcised the flesh of their foreskins that very same day, as God had said to him. Abraham *was* ninety-nine years old when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin. And Ishmael his son *was* thirteen years old when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin. That very same day, Abraham was circumcised, and his son Ishmael; and all the men of his house, born in the house or bought with money from a foreigner, were circumcised with him.” Here, we see that Abraham was obedient that very same day to the command that God had given him to circumcise all of the males of his household.

We read that Abraham circumcised Ishmael and all of his male servants, including both those who had been born in his house and those who had been bought with money; then he was also circumcised that very day. Here, we see that the obedience of Abraham was immediate. He did not wait for a period of time to carry out the instructions of the Lord. Instead, he acted immediately. We see that Abraham showed this same immediate obedience at a later time. Genesis 22:1-3 says, “Now it came to pass after these things that God tested Abraham, and said to him, ‘Abraham!’ And he said, ‘Here I am.’ Then He said, ‘Take now your son, your only *son* Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you.’ So Abraham rose early in the morning and saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son; and he split the wood for the burnt offering, and arose and went to the place of which God had told him.” In

this case, Abraham got up early the next morning and obeyed immediately.

Abraham was ninety-nine years old at the time that he and all of the men of his household were circumcised. This became a sign of the covenant that God made with Abraham. Genesis 14:14 says, “Now when Abram heard that his brother was taken captive, he armed his three hundred and eighteen trained *servants* who were born in his own house, and went in pursuit as far as Dan.” In this earlier verse, we see that Abraham had three hundred and eighteen male servants. This meant that they and all of their sons were circumcised that day. As a result, there were several hundred males circumcised that day.

This circumcision also included Ishmael, the thirteen year old son of Abraham and Hagar. This meant that circumcision became a part of the descendants of Ishmael as well as the descendants of Isaac. That is why it is so important that Genesis 17:21 says, ““But My covenant I will establish with Isaac, whom Sarah shall bear to you at this set time next year.”” Even though many of the descendants of Ishmael practice circumcision, God made it clear even before Ishmael was circumcised that the covenant would be carried on through the family of Isaac. This is important to understand because it means that the covenant God made with Abraham will be fulfilled through the family of Isaac. That is why Romans 11:26-27 will be fulfilled in a day that is still future. Those verses say, “And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: ‘The Deliverer will come out of Zion, and He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob; for this is My covenant with them, when I take away their sins.’” That is a part of fulfilling this covenant.

We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain why the Bible teaches that there is still a future for Israel and the Jews because God is going to fulfill all of the promises made in that covenant to Abraham. It is important to help our children learn to explain that God made some promises to Israel and other promises to the church. God will continue to work to fulfill all of those promises, both those made to Israel and those made to the church. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to explain these things.

The Lord Promised Sarah Would Have a Son

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain that Abraham, Ishmael and all of his male servants and their sons were circumcised. However, God promised that the covenant He had made with Abraham would be carried out through Isaac who would be born to Sarah. In this topic, we will see what happened when Sarah heard that she was going to give birth to a son.

The Lord came to visit Abraham. Genesis 18:1-5 says, “Then the Lord appeared to him by the terebinth trees of Mamre, as he was sitting in the tent door in the heat of the day. So he lifted his eyes and looked, and behold, three men were standing by him; and when he saw *them*, he ran from the tent door to meet them, and bowed himself to the ground, and said, ‘My Lord, if I have now found favor in Your sight, do not pass on by Your servant. Please let a little water be brought, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree. And I will bring a morsel of bread, that you may refresh your hearts. After that you may pass by, inasmuch as you have come to your servant.’ They said, ‘Do as you have said.’” In these verses, we see that the Lord and two angels came to visit Abraham. This appearance of the Lord is an Old Testament appearance of Christ. The two angels would later go to the home of Lot in the city of Sodom.

The Lord and the two angels came to visit Abraham during the hottest part of the day. At that time, Abraham was sitting in the door of the tent as a protection from the heat of the day. Suddenly, as Abraham was sitting there, he looked up and three men were standing fairly close to him. Abraham quickly got up from where he was sitting in the tent door and ran from the tent to meet them. When he got close to them, Abraham bowed himself to the ground. This may have been a title of respect when Abraham first called his visitor, Lord. However, by verse 14, he realized that it truly was the Lord, the creator of heaven and earth. Genesis 18:14 says, “‘Is anything too hard for the Lord? At the appointed time I will return to you, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son.’” Abraham quickly asked if he could prepare a meal for his visitors.

Abraham did not want his visitors to pass by his tent until he had the opportunity to show hospitality to them. Abraham asked if some water could be brought so that the feet of his visitors could be washed. He also invited them to rest under the shade of the terebinth trees while he prepared some food for them. Abraham wanted to refresh his visitors by preparing some food for them and providing an opportunity for them to rest before they traveled on from that place. He said that after they had eaten some food, they could go on their way. In 1 Peter 4:9, we read, “*Be hospitable to one another without grumbling.*” That attitude was certainly illustrated for us by Abraham.

Genesis 18:6-9 says, “So Abraham hurried into the tent to Sarah and said, ‘Quickly, make ready three measures of fine meal; knead *it* and make cakes.’ And Abraham ran to the herd, took a tender and good calf, gave *it* to a young man, and he hastened to prepare it. So he took butter and milk and the calf which he had prepared, and set *it* before them; and he stood by them under the tree as they ate. Then they said to him, ‘Where *is* Sarah your wife?’ So he said, ‘Here, in the tent.’” We see that Abraham had Sarah and the servants prepare a complete meal for his visitors. First, Abraham went to the tent and asked Sarah to mix up a large batch of bread dough. The word translated “cakes” means *a round piece of bread or cake cooked on a hot stone*. This would be similar to the tortillas that are made in many countries today.

Second, Abraham ran to the herd and got a tender and good calf. A calf is a young cow, either

male or female. A calf is usually only a few months old so the meat is very tender and has a very good flavor. Abraham gave this calf to one of his servants and told him to prepare the meat for a meal for the guests. This would take some time as that meant that the calf had to be butchered first and then cooked. The normal way to cook meat was over an open fire so this meant that once the servant had finished butchering the calf he would have to barbeque it over an open fire. This was hot work in the middle of the day but Abraham wanted to treat his visitors as special guests. Once the bread and the meat had been prepared, Abraham got some butter and milk to go along with them. As a result, it was a complete meal that he set before his visitors. Then, Abraham stood under the shade of the tree with them and talked with them as they ate this meal.

While they were eating and talking, the visitors asked Abraham the question, “Where is Sarah your wife?” Abraham replied that she was right there in the tent. Once Abraham responded to the call of God to leave his country and go to the land that God would show him, Abraham lived the rest of his life in tents. Hebrews 11:9-10 says, “By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as *in* a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker *is* God.” These visitors were able to see that eternal focus by the fact that Abraham said that Sarah was in the tent behind where they were eating. Her location was very important as we see in the next verses.

Genesis 18:10-15 says, “And He said, ‘I will certainly return to you according to the time of life, and behold, Sarah your wife shall have a son.’ (Sarah was listening in the tent door which was behind him.) Now Abraham and Sarah were old, well advanced in age; *and* Sarah had passed the age of childbearing. Therefore Sarah laughed within herself, saying, ‘After I have grown old, shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?’ And the Lord said to Abraham, ‘Why did Sarah laugh, saying, “Shall I surely bear a *child*, since I am old?” Is anything too hard for the Lord? At the appointed time I will return to you, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son.’ But Sarah denied *it*, saying, ‘I did not laugh,’ for she was afraid. And He said, ‘No, but you did laugh!’” Here, we see that Abraham and Sarah were given a wonderful promise even though it sounded like something that was an impossibility to them.

In these verses, it suddenly becomes clear that this is an Old Testament appearance of Christ. The One who is speaking to Abraham promises that He will return according to the time of life and Sarah, his wife, would have a son. From that point on, we see that it is the Lord who speaks to him throughout the rest of the chapter. We know that this is Christ, instead of the Father, because God the Father told Moses in Exodus 33:20, “But He said, ‘You cannot see My face; for no man shall see Me, and live.’” Christ promised that He would return and cause Sarah to become pregnant and that she would give birth to a son. Christ had given this promise to Abraham in Genesis 17:17 where we read, “Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed, and said in his heart, ‘Shall *a child* be born to a man who is one hundred years old? And shall Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear *a child*?’” However, he had apparently not told Sarah.

This time, we see that Sarah was standing near the door of the tent and listening to them. She was not thinking of the fact that God could perform a miracle any time He chose. Instead, she was thinking of what she heard from a human point of view. She realized that she would soon be ninety years old and Abraham would soon be one hundred years old. She was physically past the age where she was able to give birth to a child. Sarah thought that it was physically impossible for her to have the joy of giving birth to a son even though that was her great desire. As a result, she began to laugh within herself. The fact that Sarah laughed within herself and did not laugh so that she could be heard meant that this event gave Christ the opportunity to show that He knows our thoughts.

Christ then asked Abraham the question, ““Why did Sarah laugh?” saying, ‘Shall I surely bear a child, since I am old?’” This question by Christ shows that He knew that two different things happened within Sarah. First, she laughed. Second, Christ knew that she had asked herself a question. David wrote in Psalm 139:1-2, “O Lord, You have searched me and known *me*. You know my sitting down and my rising up; You understand my thought afar off.” Here, we see that whether the Lord is physically present, as He was with Abraham and Sarah, or whether He is sitting at the right hand of the Father, He knows our thoughts.

God reminded Abraham that nothing is too hard for the Lord. Christ promised that He would return and cause Sarah to become pregnant and that Sarah would give birth to a son. Sarah also teaches us an important lesson. She denied that she had laughed. Then, we are given the reason for her denial. She denied that she had laughed because she was afraid. When followers of Christ speak out of fear, instead of being led by the love of Christ, they may deny Christ if they are depending on their own strength. This happened to Peter the night Jesus was betrayed. Luke 22:60-61 says, “But Peter said, ‘Man, I do not know what you are saying!’ Immediately, while he was still speaking, the rooster crowed. And the Lord turned and looked at Peter. Then Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how He had said to him, ‘Before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times.’” This reminds us of the danger of depending on our own strength.

Christ corrected Sarah as He said, “No, but you did laugh!” Sarah did not need to act out of fear because the Lord had a great love for her. In fact, the desire of the Lord was for both Abraham and Sarah to be filled with joy. They were going to have a son that would fulfill the promise that God had made to them many years earlier. This is a key lesson for all of us to remember. God will always fulfill His promises. 2 Corinthians 1:20 says, “For all the promises of God in Him *are* Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us.” We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn that they can count on the promises of God because He will fulfill them. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children to understand this great promise.

The Lord Heard Abraham Plead for Sodom

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to know that they can depend on all of the promises of God. We saw that the Lord had corrected Sarah when she failed to believe the promise that she would give birth to a son. In our topic today, we will see that God then told Abraham that the city of Sodom was very evil and that it would soon be judged.

In Genesis 18:16-21, we read, “Then the men rose from there and looked toward Sodom, and Abraham went with them to send them on the way. And the Lord said, ‘Shall I hide from Abraham what I am doing, since Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? For I have known him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of the Lord, to do righteousness and justice, that the Lord may bring to Abraham what He has spoken to him.’ And the Lord said, ‘Because the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grave, I will go down now and see whether they have done altogether according to the outcry against it that has come to Me; and if not, I will know.’” In the next chapter, we will see that the two men with the Lord are actually angels.

Abraham walked with the Lord and the two others as they started on their way after Abraham had served them a meal. They were walking toward the location of the city of Sodom. As they walked, the Lord spoke to the angels and asked them the following question, “Shall I hide from Abraham what I am doing, since Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him?” This question shows that Christ asks the angels questions to help them learn and understand why the Lord does what He does. With this question, Christ revealed to the angels what was going to happen to the descendants of Abraham in the future. Christ told or reminded the angels that He was going to make a great and mighty nation from Abraham. In fact, all of the nations of the earth would be blessed through the descendants of Abraham, especially through Christ.

Then, Christ showed that He knows all of us completely. He knew what Abraham had done in the past. He knew that Abraham would command and instruct his children and that this same thing would happen to the following generations. He also knew that the family of Abraham would keep the way of the Lord. The word translated “way” means the *road, path, godly character or course of life*. Christ said that this meant there would also continue to be in the family of Abraham those who walked in righteousness and justice in the family of Abraham. God later told Elijah in 1 Kings 19:18, “‘Yet I have reserved seven thousand in Israel, all whose knees have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth that has not kissed him.’” The Lord has always kept a godly remnant among the family of Abraham.

Then, the Lord told Abraham that the sin and wickedness of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah were so great that the men were personally on their way to see just how sinful these cities really were. The second word translated “outcry” means *a cry of distress that is heard by God*. God had heard and now they were going to confirm what God had heard. Genesis 18:22-26 goes on to say, “Then the men turned away from there and went toward Sodom, but Abraham still stood before the Lord. And Abraham came near and said, ‘Would You also destroy the righteous with the wicked? Suppose there were fifty righteous within the city; would You also destroy the place and not spare *it* for the fifty righteous that were in it? Far be it from You to do such a thing as this, to slay the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous should be as the wicked; far be it from You! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?’ So the Lord said, ‘If I

find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare all the place for their sakes.”

The two men (angels) with Christ then turned and started to walk toward the city of Sodom. Meanwhile, Abraham and Christ were still standing there together. Abraham had rescued Lot and his family along with the people of Sodom so Abraham knew that the city was very evil. However, Abraham came close to the Lord and began to make his request to spare the city. Abraham had a great love and compassion for Lot and his family as well as for any others who were righteous in that city. The word translated “righteous” means *those who are declared just and right before God* because they have come to God in repentance and faith. This word was used to describe Noah in Genesis 6:9 where we read, “This is the genealogy of Noah. Noah was a just man, perfect in his generations. Noah walked with God.” In this verse, the word is translated “just”.

Abraham believed that Lot and his family were righteous before God and that there were probably at least a few others who were also righteous. Abraham wanted to know if God would destroy the righteous with the wicked. God had destroyed the wicked in the time of Noah but He had preserved Noah and his family because they were righteous. Abraham asked God if He would destroy the city if there were fifty righteous people in the city. Then, Abraham explained that he understood the character of the Lord. Twice, Abraham used the phrase, “Far be it from You.” This phrase means *God forbid or let it not be*. He said it was not the character of God to destroy the righteous with the wicked.

Abraham also recognized that the Lord is the true Judge and He will do what is right. This is important to help people understand. 1 John 1:5 says, “This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all.” This means that what God does will always be right because He has no darkness within Him. The Lord responded to the request of Abraham by saying that if He found fifty people who were righteous living within the city of Sodom, He would spare the entire city for the sake of those fifty. Since God is light and knows all things, it also meant that He knew the hearts of every person in the city and would judge righteously.

Abraham was not sure if there were even fifty righteous people in the city. As a result, Genesis 18:27-33 goes on to tell us, “Then Abraham answered and said, ‘Indeed now, I who *am but* dust and ashes have taken it upon myself to speak to the Lord: Suppose there were five less than the fifty righteous; would You destroy all of the city for *lack of five*?’ So He said, ‘If I find there forty-five, I will not destroy *it*.’ And he spoke to Him yet again and said, ‘Suppose there should be forty found there?’ So He said, ‘I will not do *it* for the sake of forty.’ Then he said, ‘Let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak: Suppose thirty should be found there?’ So He said, ‘I will not do *it* if I find thirty there.’ And he said, ‘Indeed now, I have taken it upon myself to speak to the Lord: Suppose twenty should be found there?’ So He said, ‘I will not destroy *it* for the sake of twenty.’ Then he said, ‘Let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak but once more: Suppose ten should be found there?’ And He said, ‘I will not destroy *it* for the sake of ten.’ So the Lord went His way as soon as He had finished speaking with Abraham; and Abraham returned to his place.” Here, we see that Abraham asked the Lord to show mercy to a smaller number.

Abraham realized that there might be few righteous other than Lot and his family in the city of Sodom. This caused him to plead with God to show mercy even though there might be a much smaller number of righteous. God showed His mercy in the time of Noah by waiting to bring judgment until Noah had completed the ark. 1 Peter 3:20 says that God gave time for the people to repent in the days of Noah, “who formerly were disobedient, when once the Divine longsuffering waited in the days of Noah, while *the* ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water.” However, the day did come when God brought

judgment on the earth. In the time of Jonah, God waited one hundred years to judge the city of Nineveh when the generation living at the time of Jonah did repent. Here, we see that God was willing to spare the city of Sodom if the angels found just a small group of righteous.

The Lord is a Lord of great compassion. Matthew 9:36-38 says, “But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd. Then He said to His disciples, ‘The harvest truly *is* plentiful, but the laborers *are* few. Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.’” Here, we see Christ showed that compassion during the time He was on the earth. 2 Peter 3:9 says, “The Lord is not slack concerning *His* promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.” That was why the Lord was willing to spare the entire city even if there were only ten righteous in the city.

Abraham probably thought that between the family of Lot and the husbands of the daughters that were married, there would be at least ten who would be righteous because they were followers of the Lord. 2 Peter 2:6-9 says, “and turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned *them* to destruction, making *them* an example to those who afterward would live ungodly; and delivered righteous Lot, *who was* oppressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked (for that righteous man, dwelling among them, tormented *his* righteous soul from day to day by seeing and hearing *their* lawless deeds)—*then* the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment” We will see that the Lord did show mercy and rescued Lot and two of his daughters. However, Lot had not had a positive impact on any of the other people of Sodom.

We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to pray and intercede to God for those who are not yet Christians - that the Holy Spirit will convict the lost and the Father will draw them because the Son is seeking and saving the lost. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to have this same kind of compassion.

The Lord Warned Lot to Flee from Sodom

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to develop such a compassion for those who are not yet Christians that they will pray continually for the Holy Spirit, the Father and the Son to work in the lives of those who are without Christ and without hope. In this topic, we will see why it was necessary for the Lord to destroy the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah.

We saw in the last topic that Abraham was pleading with the Lord to spare the city of Sodom even if there were only ten righteous in the city. The Lord agreed to spare the city for the sake of ten. Meanwhile, the two angels had left Abraham and Christ and were going to the city of Sodom. Genesis 19:1-5 says, “Now the two angels came to Sodom in the evening, and Lot was sitting in the gate of Sodom. When Lot saw *them*, he rose to meet them, and he bowed himself with his face toward the ground. And he said, ‘Here now, my lords, please turn in to your servant’s house and spend the night, and wash your feet; then you may rise early and go on your way.’ And they said, ‘No, but we will spend the night in the open square.’ But he insisted strongly; so they turned in to him and entered his house. Then he made them a feast, and baked unleavened bread, and they ate. Now before they lay down, the men of the city, the men of Sodom, both old and young, all the people from every quarter, surrounded the house. And they called to Lot and said to him, ‘Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us that we may know them *carnally*.’” We see that the angels reached Sodom at evening time.

Here, we see that Lot was now sitting at the gate of the city. The gate of the city was the place where the leaders of the city gathered in that time. Ruth 4:1-2 says, “Now Boaz went up to the gate and sat down there; and behold, the close relative of whom Boaz had spoken came by. So Boaz said, ‘Come aside, friend, sit down here.’ So he came aside and sat down. And he took ten men of the elders of the city, and said, ‘Sit down here.’ So they sat down.” This meant that Lot had now become one of the leaders or judges of the city. Lot saw these two angels who appeared in the form of men and invited them to come and stay at his place for the night. They responded that they would just sleep in the city square. Then, Lot insisted strongly that they come and stay at his house. This was due to the fact that he knew the sinfulness of the men of the city. Then, the men agreed to stay at the home of Lot and he prepared a feast for them that night.

However, the men of the city showed up at the door of the house of Lot. This included both the young and the old men. It included nearly all of the men from every part of the city. The word translated “know” is used for sexual relationships between Adam and Eve in Genesis 4:1 where we read, “Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, and said, ‘I have acquired a man from the Lord.’” It was used for homosexual activity in Judges 19:22 where we read, “As they were enjoying themselves, suddenly certain men of the city, perverted men, surrounded the house *and* beat on the door. They spoke to the master of the house, the old man, saying, ‘Bring out the man who came to your house, that we may know him *carnally*!’” It was used for rape just a few verses later as Judges 19:25 says, “But the men would not heed him. So the man took his concubine and brought *her* out to them. And they knew her and abused her all night until morning; and when the day began to break, they let her go.” In this and the following verses, we see that these men raped the woman until they killed her. Since these angels came in the form of men to Sodom, we see that the men of Sodom came for homosexual activity.

We see that Lot tried to satisfy the men of Sodom, both young and old, by offering them the

opportunity to sexually abuse and rape his daughters rather than his visitors. Genesis 19:6-11 says, “So Lot went out to them through the doorway, shut the door behind him, and said, ‘Please, my brethren, do not do so wickedly! See now, I have two daughters who have not known a man; please, let me bring them out to you, and you may do to them as you wish; only do nothing to these men, since this is the reason they have come under the shadow of my roof.’ And they said, ‘Stand back!’ Then they said, ‘This one came in to stay *here*, and he keeps acting as a judge; now we will deal worse with you than with them.’ So they pressed hard against the man Lot, and came near to break down the door. But the men reached out their hands and pulled Lot into the house with them, and shut the door. And they struck the men who *were at* the doorway of the house with blindness, both small and great, so that they became weary *trying* to find the door.”

The fact that Lot offered his two daughters to these men would cause us to question even the fact that Lot was righteous. However, 2 Peter 2:7-8 says, “and delivered righteous Lot, *who was* oppressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked (for that righteous man, dwelling among them, tormented *his* righteous soul from day to day by seeing and hearing *their* lawless deeds...” This verse makes it clear that the righteous soul of Lot was tormented by the evil that he saw and heard daily in the city of Sodom. This meant that the men were very public in their display of their evil actions. The fear that such activity would happen to the two visitors if they stayed in the open square was probably the reason that Lot had insisted strongly that they stay at his house.

Suddenly, the men of the city turned against Lot. They told Lot, “This one came in to stay here, and he keeps acting as a judge; now we will deal worse with you than with them.” Lot had apparently told these men in the past that their actions were sinful because they said that he kept acting as a judge. As a result, they decided to treat Lot the way that they had planned to treat the two visitors. The phrase translated “now we will deal worse” is normally translated *to be evil, to do evil, to hurt, to do wickedly* and other similar phrases. Exodus 5:23 says, “‘For since I came to Pharaoh to speak in Your name, he has done evil to this people; neither have You delivered Your people at all.’” In that case, Pharaoh had done evil to the people. Here, we see that the men of Sodom made it clear that they planned to mistreat Lot worse than they had planned to mistreat his visitors. The hearts of those men were filled with evil just like the men in the days of Noah. Genesis 6:5 says, “Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man *was* great in the earth, and *that* every intent of the thoughts of his heart *was* only evil continually.” God had told Abraham in the previous chapter that the sin in Sodom was very great.

The two angels reached out, pulled Lot into the house and then shut the door to protect Lot from the evil that the men planned against Lot. Then, the two angels struck all of the men outside the door with blindness. That did not stop the men of Sodom. Even though they could not see, we read that the men of the city were so eager to mistreat Lot that they kept trying to find the door until they became exhausted. Meanwhile, the angels told Lot that the Lord had sent them to destroy Sodom. Genesis 19:12-14 says, “Then the men said to Lot, ‘Have you anyone else here? Son-in-law, your sons, your daughters, and whomever you have in the city—take *them* out of this place! For we will destroy this place, because the outcry against them has grown great before the face of the Lord, and the Lord has sent us to destroy it.’ So Lot went out and spoke to his sons-in-law, who had married his daughters, and said, ‘Get up, get out of this place; for the Lord will destroy this city!’ But to his sons-in-law he seemed to be joking.” The angels told Lot to warn any other family members about what was soon going to happen to Sodom.

Angels have a limited knowledge just as we have limited knowledge. They did not know what other family members Lot had in the city of Sodom. As a result, they first asked Lot if he had any other family in the city. Without waiting for an answer, they started naming other possible relatives: son-in-law, sons, daughters and whoever else he had that might be related to him.

The angels told Lot to get all who were related to him out of that city quickly. The angels told Lot that they were going to destroy that city and the surrounding cities.

Then, the angels explained why the Lord had sent them to destroy Sodom and the surrounding cities. The angels said that the outcry of that city had grown great before the face of the Lord. The people of the city of Sodom and the surrounding cities were so evil that the Lord heard the cry of those who were being oppressed by these sinful cities. As a result, their judgment was going to be both immediate and eternal. Jude 7 says, “as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities around them in a similar manner to these, having given themselves over to sexual immorality and gone after strange flesh, are set forth as an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.” The immediate judgment was going to come within hours but the judgment was also going to be eternal on the people of those cities. The only way to avoid that judgment was to escape immediately.

God chose to make those cities an example to those who would live in the future. 2 Peter 2:6-9 says, “and turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned *them* to destruction, making *them* an example to those who afterward would live ungodly; and delivered righteous Lot, *who was* oppressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked (for that righteous man, dwelling among them, tormented *his* righteous soul from day to day by seeing and hearing *their* lawless deeds)— *then* the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment.” These cities experienced both the immediate and the eternal judgment of God.

Meanwhile, Lot had also lost his testimony by choosing to live in that evil city. He went and told his sons-in-law to get out of the city immediately because the Lord was going to destroy the city. However, instead of listening and taking action to get out of the city, the sons-in-law thought he was joking. As a result, they were destroyed along with the rest of the city. We want to help our physical and spiritual children understand that their testimony will not be believed if they imitate the actions of the wicked. May the Lord richly bless you as you explain these things to your children.

The Lord Showed Mercy to Lot

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn that they will lose their testimony and will not be believed if they choose to imitate the actions of the wicked as we saw that the sons-in-law of Lot did not believe him. We will also see additional consequences for Lot as we see how the past choices of Lot also had a great effect on the rest of his family.

In Genesis 19:15-17, we read, “When the morning dawned, the angels urged Lot to hurry, saying, ‘Arise, take your wife and your two daughters who are here, lest you be consumed in the punishment of the city.’ And while he lingered, the men took hold of his hand, his wife’s hand, and the hands of his two daughters, the Lord being merciful to him, and they brought him out and set him outside the city. So it came to pass, when they had brought them outside, that he said, ‘Escape for your life! Do not look behind you nor stay anywhere in the plain. Escape to the mountains, lest you be destroyed.’” In these verses, we see that Lot still did not understand the seriousness of his situation.

As the morning light dawned, the angels started urging Lot to take his wife and two daughters that were with him in the house and get out of the city quickly. They warned him that otherwise he would also be destroyed along with the city. Lot did not act like he even realized he would be destroyed with the city if he did not act quickly. Here, we see that Lot was waiting and not leaving the city. The word translated “while they lingered” means *to linger, tarry, wait or delay*. In contrast to Lot, Psalm 119:60 says, “I made haste, and did not delay to keep Your commandments.”

Finally, the two angels took the hands of Lot, his wife and his two daughters and brought them out and set them outside of the city. This happened because the Lord chose to be merciful to Lot for the sake of Abraham. Genesis 19:29 says, “And it came to pass, when God destroyed the cities of the plain, that God remembered Abraham, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow, when He overthrew the cities in which Lot had dwelt.” In this verse, we see why God was merciful to Lot. God remembered Abraham and the requests that Abraham had made for God to spare Sodom even if there were only ten righteous people in the city. Even though there were not even ten, we see that God did have the angels take Lot, his wife and the two daughters that were at the house and almost drag them out of the city so that their lives would be spared.

Once they were out of the city, the angels told Lot, “Escape for your life! Do not look behind you nor stay anywhere in the plain. Escape to the mountains, lest you be destroyed.” Here, we see that God planned to destroy all of the cities that were in the plain because of their great sinfulness. Lot was given three instructions by the angel that spoke. First, the angel told Lot to take his wife and two daughters that the angels had brought out of the city and to, “Escape for your life!” Second, Lot was told, “Do not look behind you nor stay anywhere in the plain.” Third, Lot was told, “Escape to the mountains, lest you be destroyed.” These three instructions were very clear.

Instead of obeying, Genesis 19:18-22 says, “Then Lot said to them, ‘Please, no, my lords! Indeed now, your servant has found favor in your sight, and you have increased your mercy which you have shown me by saving my life; but I cannot escape to the mountains, lest some evil overtake me and I die. See now, this city *is* near *enough* to flee to, and it *is* a little one; please let me escape there (*is* it not a little one?) and my soul shall live.’ And he said to him,

‘See, I have favored you concerning this thing also, in that I will not overthrow this city for which you have spoken. Hurry, escape there. For I cannot do anything until you arrive there.’ Therefore the name of the city was called Zoar.” Here, we see that even though the angels had almost dragged them out of the city to save them from destruction, Lot was still not ready to obey.

Instead, we see that Lot still refused to flee as the angel had said to do. Lot chose to see if the angels would give him a city that he could flee to instead of fleeing to the mountains. Lot said that he recognized the angels had shown favor to him by bringing him out of the city. The word translated “favor” means *favor, grace or acceptance*. He now asked the angel to magnify or increase the mercy and kindness the Lord and the angels had shown by sparing his life. Then, he gave an excuse to get what he wanted, instead of being obedient. He said that he could not escape to the mountains because some evil might overtake him in the mountains and he would die. Since God had spared his life by not destroying him with the city, he shows his lack of trust in God. Certainly, God would take care of him in the mountains just as he had protected him in the city. He just wanted his own desires.

He suggested, instead, that he flee to the city that they were near since it was just a little city. He said that he could enjoy his life in this little city. The fact that it was just a little city did not mean that it was any less evil than the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. We see that God had planned to destroy this little city as well. The angels said in verse 21, “...‘See, I have favored you concerning this thing also, in that I will not overthrow this city for which you have spoken.’” The angel said that because Lot had made this request for this little city, he would not destroy it. Many times, God showed mercy, for a time, to either individuals or cities for which someone prayed. This is a reminder of the great mercy of God.

The angel told Lot, his wife and his two daughters to escape quickly to that little city. The angel said that he would not do anything until they had arrived at that little city. We also see that the statement of Lot gave the name of the city for which Lot asked God to show mercy. The name “Zoar” means *insignificance*. This was a small town that was viewed by others as insignificant or unimportant. Genesis 19:23-28 says, “The sun had risen upon the earth when Lot entered Zoar. Then the Lord rained brimstone and fire on Sodom and Gomorrah, from the Lord out of the heavens. So He overthrew those cities, all the plain, all the inhabitants of the cities, and what grew on the ground. But his wife looked back behind him, and she became a pillar of salt. And Abraham went early in the morning to the place where he had stood before the Lord. Then he looked toward Sodom and Gomorrah, and toward all the land of the plain; and he saw, and behold, the smoke of the land which went up like the smoke of a furnace.” In these verses, we see the consequences for the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, as well as the wife of Lot, for continued disobedience.

The sun had already come up by the time that Lot reached the city of Zoar. Then, the Lord brought judgment on the other cities of the plain. This was not a judgment that could be explained by natural events. Instead, it says that the Lord rained fire and brimstone out of the heavens. Brimstone is melted rock like the melted rock that comes out of a volcano. However, this melted rock did not come from a volcano. Instead, we read that God rained the brimstone and fire from the heavens. The first heaven is the sky and atmosphere above us. The second heaven is where the sun, moon and stars are located. The third heaven is where the throne of God is located. The Lord may have used something like a meteor to bring judgment or he may have created something unique to bring judgment on Sodom, Gomorrah and the surrounding cities.

We see that the judgment of these cities was very complete. It included the cities, all of the plain, all of the inhabitants, and everything that grew on the ground. We see that at least two

other cities were destroyed along with Sodom and Gomorrah. Deuteronomy 29:23 says, ““The whole land *is* brimstone, salt, and burning; it is not sown, nor does it bear, nor does any grass grow there, like the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboiim, which the Lord overthrew in His anger and His wrath.”” Here, we see that Admah and Zeboiim were also destroyed. Researchers say evidence shows that this area is now under the South end of the Dead Sea. Before God destroyed these cities, Genesis 13:10 says, “And Lot lifted his eyes and saw all the plain of Jordan, that it *was* well watered everywhere (before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah) like the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt as you go toward Zoar.” After this destruction, this land became an empty waste land and eventually was covered by the Dead Sea.

The wife of Lot also became a part of that judgment. She chose to disobey the angels and looked back. This resulted in her becoming a pillar of salt. Her death is a continuing reminder of the judgment of those who are disobedient. Luke 17:32 says, “Remember Lot’s wife.” In this passage in Luke, Christ was warning that the future judgment will be like the judgments in the days of Noah and the days of Sodom and Gomorrah. In both cases, those who were judged were destroyed and only the righteous remained. At the same time, Abraham went to the place where he had pleaded with the Lord to save Sodom if only ten were righteous. Abraham looked toward the place where the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah had stood. The whole area was filled with smoke. That smoke was thick smoke like the smoke of a furnace. Abraham would learn later that Lot and his two daughters had escaped because God had shown mercy to Lot but that everyone else had been destroyed.

We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain that these cities were destroyed because of their sin. They also provide an example and warning to the cities that are filled with sin today. These cities provide a warning to all who continue to live in sin and rebellion against God. May the Lord richly bless you as you equip your children to warn those who face the coming judgment.

The Lord Showed How Sodom Affected the Daughters of Lot

In our last topic, we saw that we want to equip our physical and spiritual children to warn those who reject Christ of the coming judgment that they face. Sodom is used more than 20 times as a warning about coming judgment in other verses in the Bible. The fact that Lot had lived in that city affected his personal family. In our topic today, we will see that the two daughters who survived had also had their thinking corrupted.

Genesis 19:30-33 says, “Then Lot went up out of Zoar and dwelt in the mountains, and his two daughters were with him; for he was afraid to dwell in Zoar. And he and his two daughters dwelt in a cave. Now the firstborn said to the younger, ‘Our father *is* old, and *there is* no man on the earth to come in to us as is the custom of all the earth. Come, let us make our father drink wine, and we will lie with him, that we may preserve the lineage of our father.’ So they made their father drink wine that night. And the firstborn went in and lay with her father, and he did not know when she lay down or when she arose.” Here, we see that Lot quickly decided that he did not want to stay in Zoar for fear of his life. In verses 18-20, Lot had said, “Then Lot said to them, ‘Please, no, my lords! Indeed now, your servant has found favor in your sight, and you have increased your mercy which you have shown me by saving my life; but I cannot escape to the mountains, lest some evil overtake me and I die. See now, this city *is* near *enough* to flee to, and it *is* a little one; please let me escape there (is it not a little one?) and my soul shall live.’” God had spared Zoar at the request of Lot, but now Lot did not want to stay in that city.

Lot had thought that evil would overtake him in the mountains; but suddenly, Lot was eager to leave Zoar and go to the mountains because he feared for his life. He had already lost his wife and the rest of his family along with all of his servants and possessions. He was afraid that he and his two remaining daughters would also die if they remained in Zoar. As a result, Lot took his two daughters and went to the mountains. There, they found a cave where they could live.

Although the two daughters had survived the destruction of Sodom, the city of Sodom had destroyed their values and they had accepted part of the sinful values of the people of that city. We read that Lot was righteous in 2 Peter 2:7-8, but we do not read that his daughters were righteous. Those verses say, “and delivered righteous Lot, *who was* oppressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked (for that righteous man, dwelling among them, tormented *his* righteous soul from day to day by seeing and hearing *their* lawless deeds)” The older daughter developed a plan to have children since they were still virgins and they did not think that they would get a husband. She suggested to her sister that they get their father drunk and then have sexual relations with him while he was passed out from the wine. She said that this way they could provide a continuing family line for their father. As a result, they made their father drunk that night. Then, the older daughter went in and lay with her father and committed incest with him. He was so drunk, he did not even know what she had done. Then, she left before he became sober so that he would not even know what had happened.

We saw that the city of Sodom was a city that was filled with various kinds of sexual immorality and perversion. The older daughter had seen so much immorality in the city of Sodom that we do not even read that her conscience bothered her when she suggested this plan to her sister so that they could have children. Here, in Genesis 13:10-11, we see that Lot continued to reap the consequences of his choice. “And Lot lifted his eyes and saw all the plain of Jordan, that it *was* well watered everywhere (before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah) like the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt as you go toward Zoar. Then Lot

chose for himself all the plain of Jordan, and Lot journeyed east. And they separated from each other.” On that day, Abraham chose to trust God and walk by faith while Lot chose to walk by sight and take the well-watered land with plenty of food for his flocks.

In Genesis 19, we see some of the consequences of the choice of Lot. We might say that Lot lost a lot. Genesis 19:9 says Lot lost his reputation, “And they said, ‘Stand back!’ Then they said, ‘This one came in to stay *here*, and he keeps acting as a judge; now we will deal worse with you than with them.’ So they pressed hard against the man Lot, and came near to break down the door.” Then, Genesis 19:14 says, “So Lot went out and spoke to his sons-in-law, who had married his daughters, and said, ‘Get up, get out of this place; for the Lord will destroy this city!’ But to his sons-in-law he seemed to be joking.” This verse shows that Lot lost part of his daughters and their families. Then, Genesis 19:16 says, “And while he lingered, the men took hold of his hand, his wife’s hand, and the hands of his two daughters, the Lord being merciful to him, and they brought him out and set him outside the city.” Here, we see that his servants, flocks and all of his possessions had to be left behind, which meant that all of the servants were killed in the destruction of Sodom. Then, Genesis 19:26 adds, “But his wife looked back behind him, and she became a pillar of salt.” In this verse, he lost his wife. Now, these verses show that his remaining daughters had lost their moral values.

Genesis 19:34-35 says, “It happened on the next day that the firstborn said to the younger, ‘Indeed I lay with my father last night; let us make him drink wine tonight also, and you go in and lie with him, that we may preserve the lineage of our father.’ Then they made their father drink wine that night also. And the younger arose and lay with him, and he did not know when she lay down or when she arose.” Here, we see that the older daughter told her sister what she had done the previous night and suggested that her younger sister should do the same thing that night. Lot was probably in great sorrow because of all of the things that he had lost. As a result, it was not difficult for his daughters to get him drunk a second night. Proverbs 31:6-7 says, “Give strong drink to him who is perishing, and wine to those who are bitter of heart. Let him drink and forget his poverty, and remember his misery no more.” These verses show that many people drink to forget and numb their inner pain. The wine that Lot drank caused him to pass out so that he did not know what went on while he was under its influence.

We read that because of the wine, Lot did not know when his younger daughter came into him or when she left. He had no idea what he had done while he was passed out because of the wine. As a result of what happened those two nights, Lot destroyed his own moral integrity as he committed incest with both of his daughters. He did not know when his daughters came into him, what happened while they were there, or when they arose and left his tent. Galatians 6:7-8 says, “Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.” Even though 2 Peter tells us that Lot was a righteous man, we see that the result of choosing to sow to the flesh as a follower of God still cost him everything and he will have nothing of eternal value as he stands before God. His choices cost him everything, including the eternal future of his entire family.

We also see that the choices of Lot had a negative impact on the family of Abraham. Genesis 19:36-38 says, “Thus both the daughters of Lot were with child by their father. The firstborn bore a son and called his name Moab; he *is* the father of the Moabites to this day. And the younger, she also bore a son and called his name Ben-Ammi; he *is* the father of the people of Ammon to this day.” We do see that Lot had two grandsons as a result of the choices of his two daughters, as both of them became pregnant by their father. The firstborn had a son and he became the father of the nation of Moab. The younger daughter had a son and he became the father of the nation of Ammon. Both of those nations caused great problems to the descendants of Abraham.

The descendants of Moab later tried to curse and destroy Israel when they came from Egypt to the land of Canaan. Numbers 22:4-6 says, “So Moab said to the elders of Midian, ‘Now this company will lick up everything around us, as an ox licks up the grass of the field.’ And Balak the son of Zippor *was* king of the Moabites at that time. Then he sent messengers to Balaam the son of Beor at Pethor, which *is* near the River in the land of the sons of his people, to call him, saying: ‘Look, a people has come from Egypt. See, they cover the face of the earth, and are settling next to me! Therefore please come at once, curse this people for me, for they *are* too mighty for me. Perhaps I shall be able to defeat them and drive them out of the land, for I know that he whom you bless *is* blessed, and he whom you curse is cursed.’” Here, we see that Moab tried to curse Israel.

Then, they tried to destroy Israel with immorality. Numbers 25:1-3 says, “Now Israel remained in Acacia Grove, and the people began to commit harlotry with the women of Moab. They invited the people to the sacrifices of their gods, and the people ate and bowed down to their gods. So Israel was joined to Baal of Peor, and the anger of the Lord was aroused against Israel.” As a result, God said Moab would be judged. Ammon later joined Moab in fighting against Israel in Judges 3. Israel also later followed the idols of both nations. 1 Kings 11:33 says, ““because they have forsaken Me, and worshiped Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, Chemosh the god of the Moabites, and Milcom the god of the people of Ammon, and have not walked in My ways to do *what is* right in My eyes and *keep* My statutes and My judgments, as *did* his father David.””

We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain how the choices of Lot cost him everything including his wife, his family, his servants, his flocks and even his own moral integrity. Lot truly lost a lot. In fact, it cost him everything. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to explain the consequences of sin.

The Lord Showed Further Sin of Abraham

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain the consequences of the choices and sins of Lot even though 2 Peter tells us that he was a righteous man. Abraham was also a righteous man but he also made some wrong choices. In chapter 13, we saw that he placed his wife in danger to protect himself. Now, in chapter 20, we will see that Abraham repeated that same sin even though God had promised him that Sarah would have a son in the near future.

The Lord had recently promised Abraham that Sarah would have a son. The cities in the area of Sodom had been destroyed after that promise. Then, Genesis 20:1-3 says, “And Abraham journeyed from there to the South, and dwelt between Kadesh and Shur, and stayed in Gerar. Now Abraham said of Sarah his wife, ‘She *is* my sister.’ And Abimelech king of Gerar sent and took Sarah. But God came to Abimelech in a dream by night, and said to him, ‘Indeed you *are* a dead man because of the woman whom you have taken, for she is a man’s wife.’” Here, we see that Abraham began to move toward the south and stayed for a period of time in the city of Gerar. This city was located between the cities of Kadesh and Shur. Kadesh was at the south end of the land of Canaan and is also known as Kadesh Barnea. Shur was on the road that leads to Egypt from the land of Canaan. This meant that Gerar was a Philistine city southeast of Gaza.

About 25 years earlier, Abraham had gone down into Egypt and told Sarah to say that she was his sister. That resulted in Pharaoh telling Abraham in Genesis 12:18-19, “And Pharaoh called Abram and said, ‘What *is* this you have done to me? Why did you not tell me that she *was* your wife? Why did you say, “She *is* my sister”? I might have taken her as my wife. Now therefore, here is your wife; take *her* and go your way.’” Here, we see that Pharaoh had rebuked Abraham for his sin and sent him out of Egypt. Now, we see that Abraham chose to try and deceive Abimelech in the same way. When Abraham said, “She is my sister,” Abimelech decided to take her into his harem and sent someone to get her for him. Here, we see that Abraham again sinned and put Sarah in danger.

However, God chose to protect Sarah even though Abraham had sinned. God spoke to Abimelech in a dream during the night. In the dream, God gave Abimelech a very specific message as God said, “Indeed you are a dead man because of the woman whom you have taken, for she is a man’s wife.” Here, we see that God gave Abimelech two choices. Abimelech could return Sarah to Abraham or he would become a dead man. God made it clear that He was going to protect Sarah in spite of what Abraham had said and done. We see that Abraham endangered his wife because of his own sin and caused her to lie to try and protect himself. Galatians 6:7-8 says, “Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.” That verse was not yet written but Abraham was going to be rebuked by Abimelech for his sin.

Genesis 20:4-7 says, “But Abimelech had not come near her; and he said, ‘Lord, will You slay a righteous nation also? Did he not say to me, “She *is* my sister”? And she, even she herself said, “He *is* my brother.” In the integrity of my heart and innocence of my hands I have done this.’ And God said to him in a dream, ‘Yes, I know that you did this in the integrity of your heart. For I also withheld you from sinning against Me; therefore I did not let you touch her. Now therefore, restore the man’s wife; for he *is* a prophet, and he will pray for you and you shall live. But if you do not restore *her*, know that you shall surely die, you and all who *are*

yours.” Here, we see that God gave this warning to Abimelech before Abimelech had committed sin with Sarah. As a result, Abimelech asked the Lord in his dream, “Lord, will You slay a righteous nation also?” We see that at that point Abimelech was still innocent and God was protecting him.

Then, in his dream, Abimelech told God exactly what both Sarah and Abraham had told him. Both of them had lied to him. Abimelech said that he had done what he did with a clear conscience. In fact, Abimelech pointed out two key lessons that we want to teach our children. First, he did what he did in the integrity of his heart. The word translated “integrity” means *in strength or uprightness in heart*. The word is used in 1 Kings 9:4 where we read, “Now if you walk before Me as your father David walked, in integrity of heart and in uprightness, to do according to all that I have commanded you, *and* if you keep My statutes and My judgments.” Then, Proverbs 20:7 adds, “The righteous *man* walks in his integrity; his children *are* blessed after him.” When we walk in integrity in our hearts, that integrity will determine our actions. Abimelech said that he had done this in the innocence of his hands. He acted on the basis of a pure heart.

God immediately assured Abimelech that He knew the integrity of his heart. God said that the very reason He had prevented Abimelech from sinning was due to the fact that He knew the heart of Abimelech. This verse is also a reminder that God looks at the hearts. 1 Samuel 16:7 says, “But the Lord said to Samuel, ‘Do not look at his appearance or at his physical stature, because I have refused him. For *the Lord does not see* as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.’” After saying He knew the heart of Abimelech, God told him what to do as God said, “restore the man’s wife; for he is a prophet, and he will pray for you and you shall live.” Here, God made it clear what to do in order to prevent any judgment. God will always forgive when a person is obedient to Him. God said that He would hear the prayer of Abraham when he prayed for Abimelech because Abraham was a prophet.

In contrast, God will also bring judgment when a person is disobedient and so God told Abimelech what would happen if he did not restore Sarah to Abraham. God told Abimelech that disobedience to His command would bring judgment to Abimelech and to his kingdom. God said, “if you do not restore her, know that you shall surely die, you and all who are yours.” This is a reminder of what God told Adam in Genesis 2:16-17, where we read, “And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, ‘Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.’” Every person either chooses to obey God and come to Him in repentance and faith or rebel against God and receive consequences on this earth and eternal judgment in the future. Abimelech chose to obey God and protected the physical life of both himself and all of those in his kingdom.

Genesis 20:8-9 shows that obedience as we read, “So Abimelech rose early in the morning, called all his servants, and told all these things in their hearing; and the men were very much afraid. And Abimelech called Abraham and said to him, ‘What have you done to us? How have I offended you, that you have brought on me and on my kingdom a great sin? You have done deeds to me that ought not to be done.’” We see that Abimelech acted quickly in his obedience to God. He got up early in the morning and called all of his servants together. Then, he told them about the dream and everything that God had said. When the men heard what God had said to Abimelech, they were all filled with fear.

There are two key kinds of fear related to this statement. 2 Corinthians 7:9-10 says, “Now I rejoice, not that you were made sorry, but that your sorrow led to repentance. For you were made sorry in a godly manner, that you might suffer loss from us in nothing. For godly sorrow

produces repentance *leading* to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death.” The sorrow of the world is shown by the fact that people are sorry when they get caught and they fear the consequences. In contrast, godly sorrow is true repentance for the sin of unbelief and leads to salvation. These verses do not tell us which kind of repentance each of these men experienced. Some of the men may have had a godly fear that led to salvation while part of them may only have had a fear of the consequences. Those who had godly fear received salvation and eternal life. Those who had only a fear of the consequences experienced eternal judgment.

We also see that God used Abimelech to rebuke Abraham for his sin. Abimelech asked Abraham two questions. The first question was, “What have you done to us?” By his lie, Abraham had placed everyone in the kingdom of Abimelech in danger of immediate physical death. God said that Abraham was a prophet. In this case, we see that Abraham was being rebuked by a king who had not had the opportunities to know about God that Abraham had been given. The second question was, “How have I offended you, that you have brought on me and on my kingdom a great sin?” The word translated “offended” in this verses is most commonly translated “sin”. This is the word that Joseph used when he spoke to the wife of Potiphar in Genesis 39:9 when he said, ““*There is no one greater in this house than I, nor has he kept back anything from me but you, because you are his wife. How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?*”” Joseph made it clear that all sin is first of all against God. Abraham had sinned both against God and against Abimelech and all of the people of his kingdom.

Then, Abimelech said to Abraham, “You have done deeds to me that ought not to be done.” Abimelech made it clear to Abraham that what Abraham had done to him was wrong and that Abraham had no right to treat any person that way. Here, Abraham was being rebuked by a king, who had not known God, for the lie that he had told. Abimelech said that was wrong. We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn that when they sin against another person that it is wrong. There is no excuse that can be given because it is sin. We also want to help our children learn to explain to others that sins are both against God and against all of the people who are affected. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to explain these things.

The Lord Heard the Prayer of Abraham

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn and understand that sin is both against God and against the people involved. We saw that Abraham had sinned against God, against Abimelech and against his entire kingdom. In this topic, we will see Abraham admitted that he had sinned because of fear. Only after he had confessed his sin was Abraham then able to pray for Abimelech and his kingdom.

As we concluded our last topic, we saw that Abimelech asked Abraham two questions. In this topic, we see that he asked one more question of Abraham. Genesis 20:10-13 says, “Then Abimelech said to Abraham, ‘What did you have in view, that you have done this thing?’ And Abraham said, ‘Because I thought, surely the fear of God *is* not in this place; and they will kill me on account of my wife. But indeed *she is* truly my sister. She *is* the daughter of my father, but not the daughter of my mother; and she became my wife. And it came to pass, when God caused me to wander from my father’s house, that I said to her, ‘This *is* your kindness that you should do for me: in every place, wherever we go, say of me, ‘He *is* my brother.’”” Here, we see that Abraham had to humble himself before Abimelech and confess his sin to Abimelech. He had to explain why he had lied.

Abraham said that he thought the fear of God was not in that place. The “fear of God” speaks of *reverence and respect for God*. In contrast, the “fear of man” speaks of *fear and terror because of what a person or group of people might say or do to you*. When we have the fear of God, we will not fear what people might do to us. However, when we have the fear of men, we are afraid of what people might say or do to us. Instead of having a trust in God because of reverence and respect for God, Abraham had a fear of what the people of Gerar might do to him. In 1 John 4:18-19, we read, “There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love. We love Him because He first loved us.” We want to show others, by our example, that difference as we learn to trust God and depend on Him. The fear of men will also hinder us from telling others how to have peace with God through repentance and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Abraham had that fear when he did not even know whether the people of Gerar feared God or not. We will see that the king of Gerar did have a reverence and respect for God by the way that he treated Abraham with respect even after Abraham had lied to him. Luke 6:37-38 says, “‘Judge not, and you shall not be judged. Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you.’” Even though Abraham did judge the people of Gerar by his attitude, we will see that the king of Gerar chose to show kindness to Abraham when Abraham spoke the truth.

The third question that Abimelech asked was, “What did you have in view, that you have done this thing?” The phrase “what did you have in view” means *to see with the eyes*. God told Abraham after Lot chose the well-watered plain in Genesis 13:14-15, “And the Lord said to Abram, after Lot had separated from him: ‘Lift your eyes now and look from the place where you are—northward, southward, eastward, and westward; for all the land which you see I give to you and your descendants forever.’” In verse 14, the word is translated “look”; in verse 15, it is translated “see”. Abraham was on the top of a mountain range where he could see in all four directions. First, Abraham had just seen the destruction of Sodom and the surrounding cities and may have thought that Gerar was just as sinful and that the people might kill him in order to

take Sarah.

Second, Abraham may have thought that he could say something that was half-true and that then he would not be telling a lie. However, Satan is the deceiver and he was the first to tell a half-truth that was a lie. Genesis 3:5 Satan said, “For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” It was true that their eyes were opened and it was true that Adam and Eve knew good and evil after they ate the fruit. However, the phrase in the middle, “you will be like God”, was a lie and made the whole statement a lie. That was exactly what Abraham had done. Abraham and Sarah both had the same father so that was true. However, by saying she was his sister and not saying she was also his wife, he twisted the truth in order to deceive Abimelech and made the whole statement a lie. In telling that lie, Abraham put his wife in danger as well as Abimelech and his entire kingdom.

Third, Abraham had placed Sarah in the position where she felt forced to lie in order to protect Abraham. We see that Abraham had told Sarah, “This is your kindness that you should do for me: in every place, wherever we go, say of me, ‘He is my brother.’” Abraham had deceived himself to think that if Sarah told a lie, it would be a kindness to him. Many years later, the Lord said through Paul, in Ephesians 5:25-27, “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.” Instead of loving his wife and protecting his wife, by this lie Abraham, had put Sarah in great danger.

Instead of rebuking Abraham any more, we see that Abimelech chose to return good for the evil that Abraham had done to him by his lie. Genesis 20:14-16 says, “Then Abimelech took sheep, oxen, and male and female servants, and gave *them* to Abraham; and he restored Sarah his wife to him. And Abimelech said, ‘See, my land *is* before you; dwell where it pleases you.’ Then to Sarah he said, ‘Behold, I have given your brother a thousand *pieces* of silver; indeed this vindicates you before all who *are* with you and before everybody.’ Thus she was rebuked.” Abimelech chose to give a gift that would both justify and rebuke.

Here, we see that Abimelech gave a large gift to Abraham because he had taken Sarah into his household. This gift included sheep and oxen as well as male and female servants. The number of animals and servants is not given but the fact that these things are mentioned shows that it was a sizable gift. In addition, Abimelech said, “See, my land *is* before you, dwell where it pleases you.” This meant that Abraham was free to choose to live any place where there was sufficient food for his flocks of sheep and cattle. We do not know how much, if any, Abimelech knew about God. However, he certainly showed great kindness to Abraham and all who were with him. God had told Abimelech that Abraham would pray for him and the people of his kingdom. We will read the reason for that prayer in the next group of verses. God was also showing kindness to Abimelech.

Abimelech also realized that the actions of Abraham may have caused a loss of respect of Sarah by the servants of Abraham. As a result, he told Sarah that he had given Abraham a thousand pieces of silver. Abimelech said that this money was to vindicate Sarah in the sight of all who were with her as well as before all of the people. Here, we see that some of the servants of Abraham may have looked at Sarah with a lack of respect because she had been taken into the house of Abimelech. This payment may have been to help restore their respect of Sarah. The word translated “rebuked” means *to rebuke, to reprove, to correct, or to show to be right*. This rebuke of Sarah was for her lie of saying that Abraham was her brother instead of her husband. Abraham later used this same word to rebuke Abimelech in Genesis 21:25, where we read, “Then Abraham rebuked Abimelech because of a well of water which Abimelech’s servants

had seized.” We will see that Abraham did the same thing in that situation and gave sheep and oxen to Abimelech to make a covenant and show respect to Abimelech while also rebuking him.

We go on to read, in Genesis 20:17, that Abraham prayed to God for Abimelech and the people of his kingdom. Even though Abimelech had taken Sarah in the integrity of his heart, God had allowed judgment on the entire extended household of Abimelech to make Abimelech aware that Sarah was the wife of Abraham and not just the sister. God had closed up all of the wombs of the wife and female servants of Abimelech. This meant that during the period of time that Sarah had been taken into the house of Abimelech, none of the women related to Abimelech in any way had been able to become pregnant. That was a cause of great sorrow to the women of that time and for many years after that time when they were unable to become pregnant. This is demonstrated by the prayer of Hannah, in 1 Samuel 1:11, where we read, “Then she made a vow and said, ‘O Lord of hosts, if You will indeed look on the affliction of Your maidservant and remember me, and not forget Your maidservant, but will give Your maidservant a male child, then I will give him to the Lord all the days of his life, and no razor shall come upon his head.’” Here, we see that she had great sorrow because she did not have a child.

We saw that Sarah had also experienced this same sorrow because she did not have a son. In Genesis 16:2-3, we read, “So Sarai said to Abram, ‘See now, the Lord has restrained me from bearing *children*. Please, go into my maid; perhaps I shall obtain children by her.’ And Abram heeded the voice of Sarai. Then Sarai, Abram’s wife, took Hagar her maid, the Egyptian, and gave her to her husband Abram to be his wife, after Abram had dwelt ten years in the land of Canaan.” However, the Lord had promised Sarah just a short time before this lie that she would have a son. Genesis 18:14 says, “‘Is anything too hard for the Lord? At the appointed time I will return to you, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son.’” Now, Sarah and Abraham could also have this promised son. We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain that the Lord is the One who gives children and that they are a blessing from the Lord. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to explain these things.

The Lord Gave Isaac to Abraham and Sarah

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain that Abraham and Sarah were both rebuked for telling a lie. Abimelech chose to show kindness to them and let them know that they were forgiven. This confession of sin led to the fulfillment of the promise of God to Abraham that the Lord would give a son to Sarah and that through that son would come One who would bring blessing to all nations.

God had promised Abraham and Sarah a son. Now, the time had come for that son to be conceived and be born. Genesis 21:1-4 says, “And the Lord visited Sarah as He had said, and the Lord did for Sarah as He had spoken. For Sarah conceived and bore Abraham a son in his old age, at the set time of which God had spoken to him. And Abraham called the name of his son who was born to him—whom Sarah bore to him—Isaac. Then Abraham circumcised his son Isaac when he was eight days old, as God had commanded him.” God had promised Abraham and Sarah in Genesis 12:1-4 that God would make a great nation from them. At that time, Abraham was seventy-five years old and Sarah was sixty-five years old. Now, after twenty-five years, they finally had the son that was going to make it possible for that great nation to come into existence.

We read that the Lord visited Sarah. The word translated “visited” is translated by several different words but the word means *to exercise oversight over one who is a helper*. Potiphar bought Joseph as a slave. Genesis 39:3-5 says, “And his master saw that the Lord *was* with him and that the Lord made all he did to prosper in his hand. So Joseph found favor in his sight, and served him. Then he made him overseer of his house, and all that he had he put under his authority. So it was, from the time *that* he had made him overseer of his house and all that he had, that the Lord blessed the Egyptian’s house for Joseph’s sake; and the blessing of the Lord was on all that he had in the house and in the field.” In these verses, the word is translated “overseer” twice because Joseph was placed in charge of the other servants. Here, in these verses, we see that God was exercising oversight over Sarah and fulfilling the promise that He had made twenty-five years earlier that He would give Abraham and Sarah a son from which that nation would come.

The Lord had reminded Abraham of that promise more than a year earlier when He said to Abraham in Genesis 18:10, “And He said, ‘I will certainly return to you according to the time of life, and behold, Sarah your wife shall have a son.’ (Sarah was listening in the tent door which *was* behind him.)” God now caused that promise to be fulfilled as Sarah conceived and bore Abraham a son. Abraham named that son Isaac. In chapter 17, God told Abraham to circumcise all of the male children born in his house. Genesis 17:12 says, “‘He who is eight days old among you shall be circumcised, every male child in your generations, he who is born in your house or bought with money from any foreigner who is not your descendant.’” Abraham was obedient to this command and so he circumcised Isaac when he was eight days old.

Genesis 21:5-7 says, “Now Abraham was one hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him. And Sarah said, ‘God has made me laugh, *and* all who hear will laugh with me.’ She also said, ‘Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? For I have borne *him* a son in his old age.’” Here, we see that Abraham was one hundred years old, which meant that Sarah was ninety years old at the time that Isaac was born. The name “Isaac” means *he laughs*. The reason that he was given that name is explained in Genesis 18:11-12 where we read, “Now Abraham and Sarah were old, well advanced in age; *and* Sarah had passed the age of

childbearing. Therefore Sarah laughed within herself, saying, ‘After I have grown old, shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?’” Here, we see that Sarah laughed within herself. God had said at that time in Genesis 18:14, “Is anything too hard for the Lord? At the appointed time I will return to you, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son.” Now, that son had arrived.

We see that Sarah conceived at the set time God had said the baby would be conceived. Sarah had laughed within herself when she heard that she was going to give birth to a son even though it was past the time when she could conceive a child. Now, she said that God was the One who had made her laugh. The word that is translated “laugh” can refer to a *laugh of amazement and joy* or a *laugh of mocking*. It is used to refer to the laughter of mocking in Genesis 39:14 where the wife of Potiphar accused Joseph falsely to cover her own sin after she tried to seduce Joseph, “...she called to the men of her house and spoke to them, saying, ‘See, he has brought in to us a Hebrew to mock us. He came in to me to lie with me, and I cried out with a loud voice.’” We will also see the word used for mocking in the next verses when we read in Genesis 21:9, “And Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had borne to Abraham, scoffing.”

In contrast, in the verses in Genesis 17, Genesis 18, and this verse, the word is used to speak of the laughter of amazement and joy. Both Abraham and Sarah had been filled with amazement and joy when they first heard the promise that Isaac would be born at the set time. Now that the son had arrived, Sarah again had this laugh of amazement and joy as she thought about the way that the Lord had worked in her life. She also said that others would join her and celebrate with the laughter of amazement and joy when they heard that Sarah had given birth to a son after all of these years that she had been married to Abraham. This reminds us that this time was a time of great celebration for Abraham and Sarah as they saw how the Lord had worked in their lives and given them this son.

As Sarah gave additional thought to what had happened to them, Sarah said, “Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? For I have borne him a son in his old age.” Sarah immediately thought of what individuals would say when they heard that she had given birth to a baby in her old age. Hebrews 11:11 explains why Sarah was able to have a son even in her old age. That verse says, “By faith Sarah herself also received strength to conceive seed, and she bore a child when she was past the age, because she judged Him faithful who had promised.” This verse teaches an important lesson about faith. Sarah recognized that God is faithful and will carry out every specific promise that He has given. Since God had promised her a son, she had faith that God would give her a son. Faith is the confident assurance that God will do exactly what He has promised.

Genesis 21:8-10 says, “So the child grew and was weaned. And Abraham made a great feast on the same day that Isaac was weaned. And Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had borne to Abraham, scoffing. Therefore she said to Abraham, ‘Cast out this bondwoman and her son; for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, *namely* with Isaac.’” In that day, it was normal to wean a child when the child was about two years old. This was an event that had great importance in that time because it was a sign that the child had gone from infancy to childhood. Psalm 131:2 says, “Surely I have calmed and quieted my soul, like a weaned child with his mother; like a weaned child *is* my soul within me.” In this verse, we see that a child was old enough to understand and accept the fact that he or she was no longer an infant.

Abraham and Sarah celebrated the fact that Isaac had been weaned with a great feast on the day that he was weaned. This also meant that he had been instructed about the fact that he would now be treated as a child, instead of an infant. However, everything did not go as planned on this day and something happened that was going to cause conflict between Abraham, Sarah and

Hagar. Ishmael had been born fourteen years before Isaac. That meant that he was now about sixteen years old. Instead of showing the laughter of joy mentioned earlier, Sarah saw him showing the laughter of mocking or scoffing. We do not know exactly what he said or did. However, he may have been saying things like, “You are not a big boy” or “You are still a baby” in order to try and make Isaac cry. Perhaps he was doing things by his actions that mocked Isaac. Whatever he was saying or doing, Sarah saw his actions or heard his words and became very upset.

As a result, Sarah said, “Cast out this bondwoman and her son; for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, namely with Isaac.” This statement by Sarah is used to give a very important illustration in the New Testament. Galatians 4:22-23 says, “For it is written that Abraham had two sons: the one by a bondwoman, the other by a freewoman. But he *who was* of the bondwoman was born according to the flesh, and he of the freewoman through promise.” Sarah had tried to get an heir for Abraham by suggesting sin. As a result, Ishmael was born as a result of worldly thinking. In contrast, God had promised Abraham and Sarah that they would have a son. This son was born after it was humanly impossible for Sarah to have a son. As a result, this was a promise to fulfill the will of God. This day, they were honoring that child and Ishmael was mocking.

As a result, Sarah did not even mention the mother or the name of Ishmael that day. Instead, she just said “Cast out the bondwoman and her son.” Israel was under the Old Covenant, which was the Law. Christ came to fulfill the Law and set us free from the Law. As a result, Galatians 4:30-31 says, “Nevertheless what does the Scripture say? ‘Cast out the bondwoman and her son, for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman.’ So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman but of the free.” Then, 1 Corinthians 11:25 adds, “In the same manner *He* also *took* the cup after supper, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.’” The Old Covenant was the Law that shows that all mankind is guilty of sin. The New Covenant was made possible by the blood of Christ and sets us free from the Law. We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain why this illustration is so important for every person to understand. That will help them to explain why faith in Christ sets us free from the Law. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to explain this illustration.

The Lord Told Abraham to Cast Out the Bondwoman

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain the illustration in Galatians 4 that is given using the fact that Abraham was told to cast out the bondwoman and her son. In this topic, we will learn what happened at the time that Abraham did cast out the bondwoman and her son.

Sarah had told Abraham, “Cast out the bondwoman and her son.” Genesis 21:11-13 says, “And the matter was very displeasing in Abraham’s sight because of his son. But God said to Abraham, ‘Do not let it be displeasing in your sight because of the lad or because of your bondwoman. Whatever Sarah has said to you, listen to her voice; for in Isaac your seed shall be called. Yet I will also make a nation of the son of the bondwoman, because he *is* your seed.’” Abraham had raised Ishmael from the time of his birth until the day of the weaning of Isaac, which we said meant that Ishmael was now about sixteen years old.

As a result, the request of Sarah was very displeasing to Abraham. The word translated “displeasing” means *to be in distress or terror*. It is the word that the father of Samuel used when he spoke to Hannah about her sadness because she had no son. 1 Samuel 1:8 says, “Then Elkanah her husband said to her, ‘Hannah, why do you weep? Why do you not eat? And why is your heart grieved? *Am* I not better to you than ten sons?’” In these verses, we see that Abraham had similar distress as he heard Sarah say, “Cast out the bondwoman and her son.” Instead of enjoying the celebration of the fact that Isaac was now a child, Abraham was in great distress at the thought of sending away Ishmael. Hagar and Ishmael were both very special from the viewpoint of Abraham. It was only the Lord that could give him peace at that moment.

The Lord taught Abraham a very important lesson at that point, but He also gave Abraham a very special promise. Many years later, God used Paul to explain how husbands are to submit to their wives. Ephesians 5:21 says, “submitting to one another in the fear of God.” Then, verses 22-24 explain how a wife submits to her husband. This is followed in verses 25-33, which explains how a husband submits to his wife. Ephesians 5:25-28 says, “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish. So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself.” In these verses, God gave several key ways that a husband is to submit to his wife. The husband is to love his wife. The husband is to help his wife grow to spiritual maturity. The husband is to help his wife become holy and without blemish. The husband is to love his wife as he loves his own body.

God told Abraham that his seed would be called in Isaac. This promise is explained more fully in Hebrews 11:18, Romans 9:7 and Galatians 3:16. Galatians 3:16 says, “Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, ‘And to seeds,’ as of many, but as of one, ‘And to your Seed,’ who is Christ.” This verse fulfills the promise first given to Adam, in Genesis 3:15, that a Seed would come from him that would bruise the head of Satan. Romans 9:6-7 says, “But it is not that the word of God has taken no effect. For they *are* not all Israel who *are* of Israel, nor *are they* all children because they are the seed of Abraham; but, ‘In Isaac your seed shall be called.’” Here, we see that all followers of the Lord become the spiritual descendants of Abraham.

Then, God gave Abraham a wonderful promise. God said that he would also make a nation of Ishmael. He would do this because Ishmael was the son of Abraham. That promise gave Abraham peace. Genesis 21:14-16 goes on to say, “So Abraham rose early in the morning, and took bread and a skin of water; and putting *it* on her shoulder, he gave *it* and the boy to Hagar, and sent her away. Then she departed and wandered in the Wilderness of Beersheba. And the water in the skin was used up, and she placed the boy under one of the shrubs. Then she went and sat down across from *him* at a distance of about a bowshot; for she said to herself, ‘Let me not see the death of the boy.’ So she sat opposite *him*, and lifted her voice and wept.” Here, we see that Abraham was submissive to his wife and took action early the next morning. He gave Hagar bread and a skin of water and sent the two away.

Hagar did not know where to go and so she wandered in the Wilderness of Beersheba. That wilderness covers a large area south of the southern border of Canaan. It was part of the land that Abraham was promised would one day belong to his descendants in Genesis 15:18. That verse says, “On the same day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying: ‘To your descendants I have given this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the River Euphrates...’” Hagar and Ishmael were wandering without knowing where they were going. As a result, the water in the skin was quickly used in the hot wilderness. Ishmael soon became dehydrated because of the lack of water and so Hagar placed him under one of the shrubs in the desert.

Hagar did not want to watch her son die because she thought that he would soon die from the lack of water. As a result, she moved from him about the distance of a bowshot (the distance that a man can shoot an arrow with a bow and arrow). However, she was filled with sorrow at the thought that he might soon die. As a result, she cried and mourned with a loud voice. At this point, Hagar was without hope. She did not know about the promise that God had made to Abraham that a great nation would come from Ishmael. However, she was not alone there in the desert as the Lord was there and knew exactly what was happening. God had said back in Genesis 17:19-20, “Then God said: ‘No, Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac; I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, *and* with his descendants after him. And as for Ishmael, I have heard you. Behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly. He shall beget twelve princes, and I will make him a great nation.’” In this promise, God had said a great nation would come from Ishmael. Then, we saw earlier in this topic that God renewed this promise in verse 13, which says, “Yet I will also make a nation of the son of the bondwoman, because he *is* your seed.” God will always keep His promises.

Genesis 21:17-21 says, “And God heard the voice of the lad. Then the angel of God called to Hagar out of heaven, and said to her, ‘What ails you, Hagar? Fear not, for God has heard the voice of the lad where he *is*. Arise, lift up the lad and hold him with your hand, for I will make him a great nation.’ Then God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water. And she went and filled the skin with water, and gave the lad a drink. So God was with the lad; and he grew and dwelt in the wilderness, and became an archer. He dwelt in the Wilderness of Paran; and his mother took a wife for him from the land of Egypt.” God heard the voice of Ishmael as he lay under the bush suffering. Then, God called to Hagar out of heaven and asked her a question. That question was going to change the situation for both Ishmael and Hagar.

The angel of God just asked, “What ails you, Hagar?” God knew exactly what was bothering Hagar but He asked this question to get her attention in her sorrow and crying. In Genesis 16:11, Christ told Hagar to call her son Ishmael. That verse says, “And the Angel of the Lord said to her: ‘Behold, you *are* with child, and you shall bear a son. You shall call his name Ishmael, because the Lord has heard your affliction.’” The name “Ishmael” means *God hears*. Now, we see that God gave Hagar a second reminder of the fact that He hears. Then, the Lord

told Hagar, “Fear not, for God has heard the voice of the lad where he is.” The fact that God hears all who cry out to Him is a promise to all who are filled with fear. The Lord will hear their cry.

Then, God spoke and gave Hagar the same promise that He had earlier given to Abraham. God just told Hagar, “Arise, lift up the lad and hold him with your hand, for I will make him a great nation.” This was the same promise that God had given to Abraham about Ishmael. Suddenly, the hopeless and fearful attitude was changed. God was speaking to her and telling her that her son was going to be greatly blessed and become a great nation. Usually, there is little or nothing to see in the wilderness. However, God opened the eyes of Hagar; suddenly, she saw something that she had not seen at all. We read that she saw a well of water. Water was the need of Ishmael at that moment. God showed Hagar that there was a whole well of water so close that she could see it clearly when the Lord opened her eyes. As a result, she went to the well, filled the skin with water, and gave Ishmael all of the water that he needed to be fully revived and prepared for what would come in his future.

Then, we are told that God was with Ishmael just as He was with Hagar. Psalm 68:4-5 says, “Sing to God, sing praises to His name; extol Him who rides on the clouds, by His name YAH, and rejoice before Him. A father of the fatherless, a defender of widows, *is* God in His holy habitation.” Here, we see that God is the Father of the fatherless. Since Abraham had obeyed God and sent Hagar and Ishmael away, God became a father to him as he matured and became a man. During this time, he lived in the Wilderness of Paran. This is the area in the northeast section of the Sinai Peninsula. Israel camped in this area many days during the time of their travels from Egypt to the land of Canaan and the twelve spies were sent from this area to spy out the land of Canaan (Numbers 13:1-3). Later, Hagar took a wife for Ishmael from the land of Egypt. We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain that God has a great concern for those who have no physical father to help them in their growth to maturity. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to explain this important lesson.

The Lord Saw Abraham Make a Covenant

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain that God has a great concern for the fatherless and wants to help them in their growth to maturity. In this topic, we will see that Abraham made a covenant with Abimelech, the king of Gerar.

In Genesis 21:22-24, we read, “And it came to pass at that time that Abimelech and Phichol, the commander of his army, spoke to Abraham, saying, ‘God *is* with you in all that you do. Now therefore, swear to me by God that you will not deal falsely with me, with my offspring, or with my posterity; but that according to the kindness that I have done to you, you will do to me and to the land in which you have dwelt.’ And Abraham said, ‘I will swear.’” In chapter 20, we saw that Abimelech rebuked Abraham for saying that Sarah was his sister, instead of saying that she was his wife. Then,, he chose to show Abraham kindness. Now, we see that Abimelech had realized that the Lord had greatly blessed Abraham and Abimelech wanted to make a covenant to show this kindness with Abraham. Abimelech and the commander of his army, Phichol, had been observing the way that the Lord was blessing Abraham and everything that he had.

One day, Abimelech and Phichol came and said to Abraham, “God is with you in all that you do.” One of the things that we notice here is that others are watching what we do. They will notice the way that the Lord is working in our lives when we put our trust in Him. This blessing of the Lord caused Abimelech and Phichol to want to make a covenant of kindness with Abraham. Then, they made their request to Abraham, “Now therefore, swear to me by God that you will not deal falsely with me, with my offspring, or with my posterity; but that according to the kindness that I have done to you, you will do to me and to the land in which you have dwelt.” The phrase “you will not deal falsely” means *to trick, to cheat or to break a promise*.

Abimelech had shown kindness to Abraham when Abraham deceived him about his wife. That lie had an impact on the entire kingdom of Abimelech. However, he had chosen to show kindness to Abraham instead of evil. As a result, since Abimelech had now seen the way that the Lord blessed Abraham, he wanted Abraham to make a covenant that he would return that kindness with kindness. He asked that this covenant would be a covenant with his own children and with all of his future descendants. Abraham realized that this covenant would also affect his children and all of his future descendants. Abraham said that he would be willing to swear to make such a covenant with Abimelech and the families and people of his nation.

As a result, Abraham decided that this was the time to speak to Abimelech about something that had happened between their servants. Genesis 21:25-29 says, “Then Abraham rebuked Abimelech because of a well of water which Abimelech’s servants had seized. And Abimelech said, ‘I do not know who has done this thing; you did not tell me, nor had I heard *of it* until today.’ So Abraham took sheep and oxen and gave them to Abimelech, and the two of them made a covenant. And Abraham set seven ewe lambs of the flock by themselves. Then Abimelech asked Abraham, ‘What *is the meaning of* these seven ewe lambs which you have set by themselves?’” These verses show us that the first thing Abraham did was rebuke Abimelech because the servants of Abimelech had seized a well that had been dug by the servants of Abraham.

The word translated “rebuked” is the same word that was used when Abimelech rebuked Sarah

for saying that she was the sister of Abraham and not telling him that she was the wife. Genesis 20:16 says, “Then to Sarah he said, ‘Behold, I have given your brother a thousand *pieces* of silver; indeed this vindicates you before all who *are* with you and before everybody.’ Thus she was rebuked.” The word translated “rebuked” is the same in both passages and means *to rebuke, correct, or convince and also includes the thought that it is also a call for repentance*. Abimelech had shown kindness when Abraham confessed and told the truth. Abimelech confessed by saying that he did not know that this had happened until the very day when Abraham told him about the well.

Abraham showed that he believed the words that Abimelech did not know earlier about the well. First, Abraham did exactly what Abimelech had done when Abraham confessed his sin at the earlier time. Abraham took sheep and oxen and gave them to Abimelech as the two of them made the covenant. Sheep and oxen were the same animals that Abimelech had given to Abraham in Genesis 20:14. Those gifts showed that Abimelech had accepted the response of Abraham and Sarah to his rebuke. Abraham showed that he had accepted the confession of Abimelech that he had just found out about the well that day. Then, Abraham and Abimelech made a covenant that they would show kindness to each other and their descendants in the future years.

Abraham then did something that was not understood by Abimelech. Abraham set seven ewe lambs of the flock by themselves. As a result, Abimelech asked Abraham to explain the purpose of the seven ewe lambs that were by themselves. Genesis 21:30-34 says, “And he said, ‘You will take *these* seven ewe lambs from my hand, that they may be my witness that I have dug this well.’ Therefore he called that place Beersheba, because the two of them swore an oath there. Thus they made a covenant at Beersheba. So Abimelech rose with Phicol, the commander of his army, and they returned to the land of the Philistines. Then *Abraham* planted a tamarisk tree in Beersheba, and there called on the name of the Lord, the Everlasting God. And Abraham stayed in the land of the Philistines many days.” In these verses, we see that Abraham answered the question.

A ewe lamb is a lamb that is a female. Abraham said that Abimelech was to take these seven female lambs as a witness to the fact that Abraham and his servants had dug this well. Abraham realized that the best way to avoid conflict between his servants and the servants of Abimelech was to have Abimelech take these seven ewe lambs as a public testimony that the servants of Abraham had dug this well. Then, there would be no conflict in the future. Much later, in the New Testament, Christ chose the twelve apostles to be witnesses of his resurrection so that it was not just the word of one or two people. When they chose a replacement for Judas in Acts 1:21-22, they said, “Therefore, of these men who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John to that day when He was taken up from us, one of these must become a witness with us of His resurrection.” To make certain that there were many witnesses to verify the resurrection, 1 Corinthians 15:6 adds, “After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep.” Here, Abraham wanted many witnesses to see the seven lambs.

The place where Abraham and Abimelech made this covenant was then given the name of “Beersheba”, which means *well of the seven* or *well of the oath*. The fact that this name is used thirty-four times in the Old Testament provides a continuing remembrance of the fact that this oath between Abraham and Abimelech was made over four thousand years ago. This city became known as the southern border of Israel during much of the Old Testament. 2 Samuel 3:9-10 says, “May God do so to Abner, and more also, if I do not do for David as the Lord has sworn to him—to transfer the kingdom from the house of Saul, and set up the throne of David over Israel and over Judah, from Dan to Beersheba.” In these verses, we see that this is the

way Israel was described at the time David became the king of the entire nation of Israel. Second, we see that Abraham did one other thing at Beersheba. He planted a tree there and called on the name of the Lord, the Everlasting God. The word translated “everlasting” can point to the distant past when referring to people. Isaiah 63:9 says, “In all their affliction He was afflicted, and the Angel of His Presence saved them; in His love and in His pity He redeemed them; and He bore them and carried them all the days of old.” We see that the word is used to extend into the past at least to the time of the Exodus. It also points forward to the eternal future of the Word of God in many places. Verses like Psalm 119:89 and 119:160 point to the far distant future. Psalm 119:89 says, “Forever, O Lord, Your word is settled in heaven.” Then, Psalm 119:160 says, “The entirety of Your word *is* truth, and every one of Your righteous judgments *endures* forever.” Christ shared the same thought in Matthew 24:35, where He said, “Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.”

However, when the word is used to refer to God, it speaks of the fact that God and His acts are eternal. Ecclesiastes 3:11 says, “He has made everything beautiful in its time. Also He has put eternity in their hearts, except that no one can find out the work that God does from beginning to end.” In Genesis 21:33, we see that Abraham understood that the Lord is the Everlasting God. This same thought is given in Isaiah 9:6-7, which is a prophecy about the birth of Christ. Those verses say, “For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of *His* government and peace *there will be* no end, upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice from that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.”

We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain the fact that God (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) are eternal. Verses like Genesis 1:26, Exodus 3:14, Isaiah 11:1-2 and many others also help to explain this fact. Here, we see that Abraham understood the fact that God is eternal. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to explain that God is the Everlasting God.

The Lord Told Abraham to Offer His Son as a Sacrifice

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain the fact that Abraham and many other people in the Old Testament understood that God (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) is eternal. In this topic, we will see that God tested Abraham to reveal his heart for all future generations.

In Genesis 22:1-2, we read, “Now it came to pass after these things that God tested Abraham, and said to him, ‘Abraham!’ And he said, ‘Here I am.’ Then He said, ‘Take now your son, your only *son* Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you.’” In these verses, we see that God gave Abraham a test so that future generations could better understand the faith of Abraham. Testing and temptation can happen in the same situation. James 1:2-4 says, “My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have *its* perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.” God allows tests in the lives of His followers to show that they will stand strong in that test. At the same time, those who are depending on their own strength will say that they are being tempted to sin. James 1:13-15 uses the same root word when those verses say, “Let no one say when he is tempted, ‘I am tempted by God’; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.”

These verses show that it was a test in the life of Abraham because he was obedient to God and did not depend on his own strength. Sometime after Abraham and Abimelech made a covenant, we see that God chose to test Abraham. First, God told Abraham to take his son, his only son Isaac. God also called him his only son in verses 12 and 16. The word translated “only” is used two primary ways in the Old Testament. Seven times, it speaks of a beloved, only child; four times, it speaks of an only begotten child. One illustration of this second use is in Zechariah 12:10 where we read, “‘And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they pierced. Yes, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for *his* only *son*, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn.’” This verse shows that in the future Israel will grieve because they pierced Christ, the only begotten Son of God. The three uses by God to Abraham speak of an only beloved child.

Abraham was told to take his only beloved son and offer him as a burnt sacrifice in the land of Moriah on a mountain that God would show him. 2 Chronicles 3:1 says, “Now Solomon began to build the house of the Lord at Jerusalem on Mount Moriah, where *the Lord* had appeared to his father David, at the place that David had prepared on the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite.” Because of this verse, many believe that the place where Abraham was to offer Isaac as a sacrifice was the place where the Temple of Solomon was later built in the city of Jerusalem. These things taken together show that God was using Abraham to give a picture of the fact that He would send His Only Son to die and pay the penalty for our sin so that we could receive forgiveness.

We go on to read about the obedience of Abraham. Genesis 22:3-5 says, “So Abraham rose early in the morning and saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son; and he split the wood for the burnt offering, and arose and went to the place of which God had told him. Then on the third day Abraham lifted his eyes and saw the place afar

off. And Abraham said to his young men, ‘Stay here with the donkey; the lad and I will go yonder and worship, and we will come back to you.’” In these verses, we see that Abraham was obedient immediately. He got up early the next morning so that he could carry out the instructions of God.

By this time, Isaac was at least twenty years old and may have been close to thirty years old. Abraham was getting advanced in age since he was one hundred years older than Isaac. It was about 45 miles to Mount Moriah so that trip was going to take them two full days. Abraham saddled his donkey, split the wood, took Isaac and two of the young men who were servants, and started toward Mount Moriah. Sometime, early on the third day, Abraham could see the place in the distance. Then Abraham gave the two young men the following instructions, “Stay here with the donkey; the lad and I will go yonder and worship, and we will come back to you.”

These instructions sound very simple but they teach us a great lesson about the faith of Abraham. That faith is shown in the phrase, “We will come back to you.” Hebrews 11:17-19 says, “By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten *son*, of whom it was said, ‘In Isaac your seed shall be called,’ concluding that God *was* able to raise *him* up, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense.” These verses show us the great faith that Abraham had in the resurrection. Abraham realized that when he offered Isaac as a sacrifice, God would raise him back from the dead so that the two of them would be able to return together to the two servants. God had promised Abraham that his descendants, particularly the descendent that would bruise the head of Satan, would come from Isaac. As you remember, Genesis 3:15 says, “‘And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel.’” Abraham fully expected God to raise Isaac from the dead.

The instructions also teach us another important lesson. Abraham said that he and Isaac were going to go to a place in the distance to worship. This meant that what they would be doing would be an act of worship. The word translated “worship” means *to bow down or to prostrate oneself*. John 4:20-24 says, “‘Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, and you *Jews* say that in Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship.’ Jesus said to her, ‘Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father. You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God *is* Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.’” In these verses, Christ made it clear that worship is more than just the physical bowing of the knees. It is bowing our hearts in submission to God and that comes from our human spirit and is according to truth.

We go on to read, in Genesis 22:6-8, “So Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid *it* on Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife, and the two of them went together. But Isaac spoke to Abraham his father and said, ‘My father!’ And he said, ‘Here I am, my son.’ Then he said, ‘Look, the fire and the wood, but where *is* the lamb for a burnt offering?’ And Abraham said, ‘My son, God will provide for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering.’ So the two of them went together.” The two young men stayed with the donkey while Abraham and Isaac continued on their way alone. Isaac carried the wood that had been split while Abraham carried the fire that would set the wood on fire and the knife that would be used to kill Isaac.

They may have been very quiet as they walked toward Mount Moriah. Abraham was probably thinking about what he was going to do while Isaac had a question about what was going to happen. Finally, the silence was broken as Isaac spoke to get the attention of his father. Isaac

said, “Look, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?” Abraham had offered many sacrifices through the years. Isaac had watched and probably participated by helping his father as he grew from a boy into a young man. As a result, he knew that to offer a burnt offering there had to be a body to burn on the altar. That was normally a lamb.

Isaac realized that they had everything that they needed in order to offer a sacrifice except for a lamb. They had the wood. They had the fire to set the wood on fire. They would be able to find rocks where they were going to set up an altar. They even had a knife to kill the sacrifice. However, Isaac saw that they did not have a lamb. That was the most important thing because that would be the sacrifice. The answer that Abraham gave also gave an example of what God the father would do in the future as Abraham said, “My son, God will provide for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering.” God was going to provide the sacrifice that Abraham and Isaac would need later that day.

However, God was also going to provide His own Son as the sacrifice for sin for all mankind. God spoke about Abraham in Genesis 20:7 and said, ““Now therefore, restore the man’s wife; for he *is* a prophet, and he will pray for you and you shall live. But if you do not restore *her*, know that you shall surely die, you and all who *are* yours.”” In this verse, we see that God said Abraham was a prophet. We see that Christ fulfilled this prophecy in John 1:29 which says, “The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, ‘Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!’” Then, John 1:35-36 adds, “Again, the next day, John stood with two of his disciples. And looking at Jesus as He walked, he said, ‘Behold the Lamb of God!’” Truly, Christ did provide Himself as our sacrifice to take away our sin. Then, Abraham and Isaac walked together to the very area where Christ would be that sacrifice for us.

We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain the fact that Abraham prophesied that Christ would provide Himself as the sacrifice for our sins. In this way, we can help them become equipped to share the message of Christ from many passages. May the Lord bless you richly as you equip your children to teach about Christ, our sacrifice.

The Lord Provided a Sacrifice for Abraham

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to teach about the death and resurrection of Christ from many different passages in the Old Testament. The prophecy by Abraham certainly provides one of those Old Testament illustrations of what Christ did. In this topic, we will learn more about the fact that God provided a sacrifice for Abraham.

Abraham was being obedient to all that God had told him to do. He was preparing to offer his son, Isaac, as a sacrifice. Genesis 22:9-11 says, “Then they came to the place of which God had told him. And Abraham built an altar there and placed the wood in order; and he bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar, upon the wood. And Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. But the Angel of the Lord called to him from heaven and said, ‘Abraham, Abraham!’ So he said, ‘Here I am.’” Abraham and Isaac walked together to Mount Moriah, the place where God had told Abraham to offer his son as a burnt sacrifice. The two servants saw this place from a great distance, but they did not see what happened on that mountain.

Abraham and Isaac arrived at the place where God had told Abraham to offer his son as a sacrifice. Then, Abraham and Isaac built the altar where the sacrifice would be offered. We have no idea what Isaac was thinking during this time. However, once the altar was prepared, we see that Isaac was obedient to his father, even though it looked like that obedience meant certain death. We said that Isaac was probably between twenty and thirty years old. Abraham was between a hundred and twenty and a hundred and thirty years old. As a result, it would have been impossible for Abraham to bind Isaac and place him on the altar unless Isaac chose to be obedient to his father. In that way, he provided an example of the obedience of Christ. David prophesied of Christ when he wrote in Psalm 40:6-8, “Sacrifice and offering You did not desire; my ears You have opened. Burnt offering and sin offering You did not require. Then I said, ‘Behold, I come; in the scroll of the book *it is* written of me. I delight to do Your will, O my God, and Your law *is* within my heart.’” In Hebrews 10:5-7, we see that Christ quoted these verses as He carried out the will of the Father.

Isaac showed his submission to his father by letting his father bind him and place him on the altar on top of the wood. Then, Abraham took his knife and prepared to kill his son. At that very moment, the Angel of the Lord (Christ) called to him from heaven. Abraham immediately responded by saying, “Here I am.” Genesis 22:12-14 tells us, “And He said, ‘Do not lay your hand on the lad, or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only *son*, from Me.’ Then Abraham lifted his eyes and looked, and there behind *him was* a ram caught in a thicket by its horns. So Abraham went and took the ram, and offered it up for a burnt offering instead of his son. And Abraham called the name of the place, The-Lord-Will-Provide; as it is said *to* this day, ‘In the Mount of the Lord it shall be provided.’” Christ told Abraham not to hurt his son or do anything to him.

Christ said that Abraham had shown that he feared God and was willing to be obedient to him even to the point of being willing to kill his son. Christ showed that same attitude when He said in John 6:38, “For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.” Abraham had shown that same desire by offering his son as a sacrifice. At the same time, Isaac had shown his own willingness to do the will of God by being submissive and allowing his father to bind him and place him on the altar. According to Ephesians 1:4-5, God had planned for Christ to be our sacrifice before the foundation of the world. In the same way,

God had also prepared a sacrifice in advance for Abraham. God told Abraham to turn around and look behind him. As he looked, he suddenly realized that there was a ram (a male sheep) caught by its horns in some thick brush. God had provided for this sacrifice to be there when it was needed.

Abraham then set Isaac free and went and took the ram out of the thick brush. Abraham and Isaac together offered up that ram on the altar instead of Abraham offering his son. Abraham called the name of that place Jehovahjireh (KJV) which means The-Lord-Will-Provide. That place was still called by that name when Moses wrote the book of Genesis nearly 600 years later. That place became the site the Lord appeared to David in 2 Samuel 24:16 where we read, “And when the Angel stretched out His hand over Jerusalem to destroy it, the Lord relented from the destruction, and said to the Angel who was destroying the people, ‘It is enough; now restrain your hand.’ And the Angel of the Lord was by the threshing floor of Araunah (Ornan) the Jebusite.” That was the place where Solomon later built the temple as 2 Chronicles 3:1 says, “Now Solomon began to build the house of the LORD at Jerusalem on Mount Moriah, where *the LORD* had appeared to his father David, at the place that David had prepared on the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite.” As a result, this is still an important location to the Jews and will be the location of the future temple in Jerusalem.

We go on to read in Genesis 22:15-19, “Then the Angel of the Lord called to Abraham a second time out of heaven, and said: ‘By Myself I have sworn, says the Lord, because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only *son*—blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which *is* on the seashore; and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies. In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice.’ So Abraham returned to his young men, and they rose and went together to Beersheba; and Abraham dwelt at Beersheba.” Here, we see that Christ spoke again to Abraham from heaven. This time, Christ reminded Abraham of the promise that He had given to him many years earlier.

Christ said that He had sworn by Himself. This verse is quoted in Hebrews 6:13-18 where we read, “For when God made a promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself, saying, ‘Surely blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply you.’ And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise. For men indeed swear by the greater, and an oath for confirmation *is* for them an end of all dispute. Thus God, determining to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed *it* by an oath, that by two immutable things, in which it *is* impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before *us*.” Here, we see that the Lord explains this verse in much more detail. God confirmed His word to Abraham by swearing by Himself. As a result, Abraham was assured that the promise the Lord had made would be fulfilled.

Romans 4:20-21 also spoke of Abraham when those verses say, “He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform.” The promises in Romans 4 point to the fact that Abraham is the father of all who have faith. Later, when Abraham sent a servant to get a wife for Isaac, the mother and brother said in Genesis 24:60, “And they blessed Rebekah and said to her: ‘Our sister, *may you become the mother of* thousands of ten thousands; and may your descendants possess the gates of those who hate them.’” These verses also show that the promise made to Abraham would be carried on through the family of Isaac and Rebekah. The Seed (Christ) that would come from them would bring blessing to all of the nations of the earth. The Lord said that this promise would be fulfilled because of the fact that Abraham had obeyed the voice of the Lord. That obedience was shown most completely when he offered Isaac as a sacrifice on Mount Moriah.

Abraham and Isaac returned together to the place where the two servants were waiting with the donkey. Abraham had told the servants that he and Isaac would go to the mountain and worship and then they would return. As they came back, the servants had no idea what had happened on that mountain while the two were gone. They did not realize that Isaac had been placed on the altar. However, they may have realized that Abraham and Isaac had something happen as they worshiped on that mountain because they had both grown in their understanding of the way that God works in our lives. Then, the four traveled together back to Beersheba. We see that Abraham continued to live in the area of Beersheba for a period of time.

Sometime after they returned to Beersheba, Abraham received some news about his family. Genesis 22:20-24 says, "Now it came to pass after these things that it was told Abraham, saying, 'Indeed Milcah also has borne children to your brother Nahor: Huz his firstborn, Buz his brother, Kemuel the father of Aram, Chesed, Hazo, Pildash, Jidlaph, and Bethuel.' And Bethuel begot Rebekah. These eight Milcah bore to Nahor, Abraham's brother. His concubine, whose name was Reumah, also bore Tebah, Gaham, Thahash, and Maachah." Here, we see that Abraham learned that Nahor now had both children and grandchildren. We will see that this news became very important to Abraham after the death of Sarah because it meant that there were quite a number of family members related to Abraham living in the city of Haran.

In this topic, we see that God tests all those who trust in Him because He wants to help us in our spiritual growth. We want to help our physical and spiritual children understand the purpose of testing in their own lives so that they can help others learn to understand testing when it comes to the life of any follower of the Lord. Acts 14:22 tells us that Paul and Barnabas were, "strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting *them* to continue in the faith, and *saying*, 'We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God.'" All followers of the Lord need to be prepared for the fact that tribulations will come and that the Lord will help us grow through those tribulations. May the Lord richly bless you as you prepare your children to understand the testing of the Lord.

Abraham Wanted to Buy a Burial Place for Sarah

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to understand that God will allow tests to come into their lives to help them in their spiritual growth. We saw a real example of that testing in the lives of Abraham and Isaac. In this topic, we will see what happened when Sarah died.

In Genesis 23:1-4, we read, “Sarah lived one hundred and twenty-seven years; *these were* the years of the life of Sarah. So Sarah died in Kirjath Arba (that *is*, Hebron) in the land of Canaan, and Abraham came to mourn for Sarah and to weep for her. Then Abraham stood up from before his dead, and spoke to the sons of Heth, saying, ‘I *am* a foreigner and a visitor among you. Give me property for a burial place among you, that I may bury my dead out of my sight.’” Sarah is the only woman in the Bible whose age at death is mentioned as we see that she was a hundred and twenty-seven years old. This means that Isaac was thirty-seven at the time that Sarah died. Genesis 21:12-13 says, “But God said to Abraham, ‘Do not let it be displeasing in your sight because of the lad or because of your bondwoman. Whatever Sarah has said to you, listen to her voice; for in Isaac your seed shall be called. Yet I will also make a nation of the son of the bondwoman, because he *is* your seed.’” These verses show the importance of Sarah as the mother of Isaac. In addition, it is also a reminder that Sarah was past the age of childbearing at the time of the birth of Isaac.

Sarah died in Hebron (formerly known as Kirjath Arba or city of Arba). This place was about half way between Jerusalem and Beersheba. Abraham had built an altar at this place many years earlier. Genesis 13:18 says, “Then Abram moved *his* tent, and went and dwelt by the terebinth trees of Mamre, which *are* in Hebron, and built an altar there to the Lord.” This city was near a large grove of terebinth trees owned by Mamre. Here, we see that Abraham had returned to this area after spending a period of time in the area of Beersheba. Genesis 49:29-31 shows us that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob would all be buried in the same place. Those verses say, “Then he charged them and said to them: ‘I am to be gathered to my people; bury me with my fathers in the cave that *is* in the field of Ephron the Hittite, in the cave that *is* in the field of Machpelah, which *is* before Mamre in the land of Canaan, which Abraham bought with the field of Ephron the Hittite as a possession for a burial place. There they buried Abraham and Sarah his wife, there they buried Isaac and Rebekah his wife, and there I buried Leah” Hebron later became an important city in Israel as it is mentioned seventy-one times in the Old Testament.

We will see in the rest of this chapter how this became a burial place for Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. In his mourning and sorrow, Abraham went and spoke to the sons of Heth. Heth was a son of Canaan as Genesis 10:15 says, “Canaan begot Sidon his firstborn, and Heth. In these verses, we see that Abraham made the following request to the sons of Heth, “I am a foreigner and a visitor among you. Give me property for a burial place among you, that I may bury my dead out of my sight.” Abraham wanted to purchase a piece of land from the descendants of Heth so that he could bury Sarah. At this point, Abraham did not even have enough land in Canaan for a burial place. He realized that as a foreigner and visitor he had to purchase land from the people of the area in order to have a place where he could bury Sarah. He had picked out a place that he wanted to purchase but he had to make an agreement with the people of the land to buy that land from the owner.

Genesis 23:5-6 tells us the answer that Abraham received. Those verses say, “And the sons of Heth answered Abraham, saying to him, ‘Hear us, my lord: You *are* a mighty prince among us;

bury your dead in the choicest of our burial places. None of us will withhold from you his burial place, that you may bury your dead.” By this answer, the sons of Heth showed that they had developed a real respect for Abraham even though he was from a different country. We see that they recognized him as a mighty prince. The word translated “mighty” is used more than twenty-six hundred times in the Old Testament. In over twenty-three hundred of those uses, it speaks of God, especially in titles. In just the first chapter of Genesis, it is used over thirty times to speak of God as the creator of heaven and earth and everything on the earth. Genesis 17:8 says, “Also I give to you and your descendants after you the land in which you are a stranger, all the land of Canaan, as an everlasting possession; and I will be their God.” In this verse, we see that God said that He would be the God of the descendants of Abraham. In Genesis 28:13, we read, “And behold, the Lord stood above it and said: ‘I am the Lord God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie I will give to you and your descendants.’” Here, the Lord told Jacob that He was the God of Abraham and Isaac.

The word “prince” is translated by such words as *prince, captain, chief or ruler*. As a result, the use of this title by the sons of Heth showed that they recognized that God was with Abraham. It also shows that they had a high respect of Abraham as a leader even though he was from a foreign land. As a result, they invited Abraham to choose one of their choicest burial places as the place to bury Sarah. They said that none of them would refuse to sell that piece of property to Abraham so that he would have a burial place for Sarah and later other family members as we saw earlier in Genesis 49. Three generations: Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah, and Leah and Jacob were all buried in the cave that Abraham purchased that day.

The fact that the leaders of the sons of Heth had great respect for Abraham allowed them to speak for all of the people when they said that no one would withhold the land that Abraham chose to purchase as a burial place for his family. They wanted to make certain that Abraham had the property for a proper burial. Genesis 23:7-9 says, “Then Abraham stood up and bowed himself to the people of the land, the sons of Heth. And he spoke with them, saying, ‘If it is your wish that I bury my dead out of my sight, hear me, and meet with Ephron the son of Zohar for me, that he may give me the cave of Machpelah which he has, which is at the end of his field. Let him give it to me at the full price, as property for a burial place among you.’” Abraham already knew what piece of land he would like for a burial place; so when the sons of Heth said that they would not withhold any piece of land, Abraham told them which piece of land he would like to buy.

Abraham then made his request of the leaders of the sons of Heth. He began by returning the respect that the leaders had shown to him when they called him a mighty prince. We see that Abraham stood up and bowed to the leaders of the sons of Heth as a show of his respect for them. Abraham had earlier shown this same respect when the Lord and two angels came to visit him. Genesis 18:2-3 says, “So he lifted his eyes and looked, and behold, three men were standing by him; and when he saw *them*, he ran from the tent door to meet them, and bowed himself to the ground, and said, ‘My Lord, if I have now found favor in Your sight, do not pass on by Your servant.’” In that situation, Abraham had shown his respect for the Lord by bowing himself to the ground. Here, Abraham showed his respect for the leaders of the people of the land by bowing himself.

After showing respect, Abraham went on to make his request. Abraham asked the leaders to speak to Ephron on his behalf. Abraham wanted them to request of Ephron, “that he may give me the cave of Machpelah which he has, which is at the end of his field.” The name of this cave means *double or portion*. The words of Abraham indicate that he did not personally know Ephron so he wanted the leaders to meet with Ephron and speak to him on behalf of Abraham. This indicates that Abraham wanted to do whatever was proper in making the arrangements for a burial place for Sarah. Abraham just asked for permission to buy the cave that was at the end

of the field of Ephron. However, we will see that Ephron said that he would sell the cave with the entire field.

Abraham also said that he would pay Ephron the full price for the cave. In this way, Abraham made it clear that he was not going to try and bargain with Ephron over the price of the cave. He wanted to treat Ephron fairly by giving him the full price so that there would not be any misunderstanding or disagreement. In this way, Abraham showed us the importance of being fair with others when asking them to sell anything to us. Philippians 2:14-15 says, “Do all things without complaining and disputing, that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world.” These verses show us that we are to be a witness to the world by the way we deal with others. Abraham wanted to provide such an example even though he was in sorrow at the loss of his wife. As a result, he was ready to pay the full price requested. This gives us an example of how to shine as lights in the world.

We also want to provide an example to our physical and spiritual children of how to shine as a light for the Lord in a world around us that is filled with sin. Matthew 5:16 says, “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.” The men of Heth had seen the works of Abraham and they had come to respect him as a mighty prince. We want to help our children learn that they will be respected by the world around them as their lives reflect the light of the Lord. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children earn the respect of others by their lives.

Abraham Buried His Wife in the Cave of Machpelah

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to earn the respect of others by the way that we deal with them. This is a key even if they fail to return that same respect in the way that they deal with us. In our topic today, we will see that Ephron agreed to sell Abraham more than he had requested.

In Genesis 23:10-13, we read, “Now Ephron dwelt among the sons of Heth; and Ephron the Hittite answered Abraham in the presence of the sons of Heth, all who entered at the gate of his city, saying, ‘No, my lord, hear me: I give you the field and the cave that *is* in it; I give it to you in the presence of the sons of my people. I give it to you. Bury your dead!’ Then Abraham bowed himself down before the people of the land; and he spoke to Ephron in the hearing of the people of the land, saying, ‘If you *will give it*, please hear me. I will give you money for the field; take *it* from me and I will bury my dead there.’” We see that Ephron was a Hittite (another name for the sons of Heth). The Hittites are mentioned forty-eight times in the Old Testament.

Ephron gave Abraham his answer at the gate of the city. In that time, the elders of the city would meet at the gate of the city to make their decisions. Most cities only had one gate in and out of the city so everyone had to go in and out of that gate to get from their homes to their fields. That was why the gate was the place where the elders of the city met to make their decisions. We see that when Ephron gave his answer to Abraham, the sons of Heth were gathered at the gate and any of the others who were passing in or out of the gate could also stand to listen and hear the decisions that were made at the gate. This is illustrated in Ruth 4:1-2 where we read, “Now Boaz went up to the gate and sat down there; and behold, the close relative of whom Boaz had spoken came by. So Boaz said, ‘Come aside, friend, sit down here.’ So he came aside and sat down. And he took ten men of the elders of the city, and said, ‘Sit down here.’ So they sat down.”

Ephron told Abraham in the presence of the elders of the city that he would sell the cave but he also wanted to sell much more than the cave. That is why he said, “I give you the field and the cave that is in it.” The field in front of the cave was worth very little because most of that area lacks water, so only a small amount of grass that the cattle and sheep could eat would grow there. However, by selling both the field and the cave, Ephron knew that he could make the price for the land much higher. In addition, that meant that Abraham would be the one who would have to pay the taxes on the land instead of Ephron. He told Abraham that he could bury his dead in the cave.

However, Abraham wanted to complete the purchase of the cave and field before he buried Sarah. Even though he was a stranger and a foreigner in the land, he realized that a person could charge much more money if the dead had already been buried. Abraham wanted to complete the purchase while all of the witnesses were there. As a result, Abraham said that he would give the price of the field as well as the cave. He told Ephron that he would bury his dead as soon as Ephron received the price of the land and cave from him. Then, Genesis 23:14-16 says, “And Ephron answered Abraham, saying to him, ‘My lord, listen to me; the land *is worth* four hundred shekels of silver. What *is* that between you and me? So bury your dead.’ And Abraham listened to Ephron; and Abraham weighed out the silver for Ephron which he had named in the hearing of the sons of Heth, four hundred shekels of silver, currency of the merchants.”

Here, we see that Ephron immediately gave Abraham a price that he said the land and the cave were worth. He said that the cave and the field were worth four hundred shekels of silver. A shekel was a little less than a half ounce of silver. As a result, the price that he set for his field and the cave would have been about two hundred ounces of silver. That was probably much more than the land was actually worth. At the same time, Ephron tried to make it sound like it was a very small amount when he said, "What is that between you and me?" Many times, people in the funeral business try to make money from the sorrow and grief for a family member or other relative that has died. This may have been exactly what Ephron was doing by what he said. That would explain why he just encouraged Abraham to go and bury his dead and they could determine a final price at a later time.

Instead, we see that Abraham made the decision to immediately pay the money while the witnesses were there to witness that Abraham had paid the price for the field and cave. We read that Abraham weighed out the four hundred shekels of silver. That was the price that Ephron had named in the hearing of the sons of Heth and so Abraham immediately weighed out four hundred shekels of silver. The merchants or people who bought and sold goods to other people had scales and weights to weigh what they sold. As a result, all of the people sitting at the gate of the city recognized that Abraham had paid the exact price that Ephron had requested.

Abraham had come into the land of Canaan when he was seventy-five years old. Genesis 12:4 says, "So Abram departed as the Lord had spoken to him, and Lot went with him. And Abram *was* seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran." We have seen that Sarah was ten years younger than Abraham so that meant that Sarah was sixty-five at the time that they came into the land of Canaan. Then, Genesis 23:1 says, "Sarah lived one hundred and twenty-seven years; *these were* the years of the life of Sarah." This meant that Abraham and Sarah had lived in the land of Canaan for sixty-two years before Sarah died. For that entire period of time, they had not owned one square foot of land in the land of Canaan. Now, Abraham had finally purchased some land as a burial place for Sarah. It would still be approximately five hundred additional years before the nation of Israel would take possession of the entire land.

Abraham gave a great example of what it means to walk by faith. Hebrews 11:8-10 says, "By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as *in* a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker *is* God." These verses point out the fact that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob lived in tents all through their time in the land of Canaan because they were looking for a city that would be eternal instead of a city that would only exist for a period of years on this earth.

After the land had been purchased and witnessed by the sons of Heth, we go on to read that only then did Abraham bury his wife. Genesis 23:17-20 says, "So the field of Ephron which *was* in Machpelah, which *was* before Mamre, the field and the cave which *was* in it, and all the trees that *were* in the field, which *were* within all the surrounding borders, were deeded to Abraham as a possession in the presence of the sons of Heth, before all who went in at the gate of his city. And after this, Abraham buried Sarah his wife in the cave of the field of Machpelah, before Mamre (that *is*, Hebron) in the land of Canaan. So the field and the cave that *is* in it were deeded to Abraham by the sons of Heth as property for a burial place." Here, we see a description of everything that was deeded to Abraham along with the land.

That deed included the field of Ephron as well as the cave of Machpelah at the end of the field. It also included all of the trees that were in the field and that surrounded the field. These also became the official possession of Abraham in the presence of all of the witnesses that had gathered together at the gate of the city. It was only after this transfer of the property to

Abraham was complete that Abraham went and buried Sarah. She was buried in the cave which stood at the end of the field of Machpelah. At that time, this was located near a city named Mamre. However, the name of that city was later changed and became known as the city of Hebron.

This field and cave were deeded to Abraham as a burial place. We see that this was the place where Abraham was later buried. Genesis 25:8-10 says, “Then Abraham breathed his last and died in a good old age, an old man and full *of years*, and was gathered to his people. And his sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah, which *is* before Mamre, in the field of Ephron the son of Zohar the Hittite, the field which Abraham purchased from the sons of Heth. There Abraham was buried, and Sarah his wife.” This later became the place where Isaac lived during the final years of his life. Genesis 35:27-29 says, “Then Jacob came to his father Isaac at Mamre, or Kirjath Arba (that *is*, Hebron), where Abraham and Isaac had dwelt. Now the days of Isaac were one hundred and eighty years. So Isaac breathed his last and died, and was gathered to his people, *being* old and full of days. And his sons Esau and Jacob buried him.”

The final words of Jacob also refer to this place. Genesis 49:29-33 says, “Then he charged them and said to them: ‘I am to be gathered to my people; bury me with my fathers in the cave that *is* in the field of Ephron the Hittite, in the cave that *is* in the field of Machpelah, which *is* before Mamre in the land of Canaan, which Abraham bought with the field of Ephron the Hittite as a possession for a burial place. There they buried Abraham and Sarah his wife, there they buried Isaac and Rebekah his wife, and there I buried Leah. The field and the cave that *is* there *were* purchased from the sons of Heth.’ And when Jacob had finished commanding his sons, he drew his feet up into the bed and breathed his last, and was gathered to his people.” Here, we see that this piece of property became a very important part of the history of Israel. We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain why the purchase of this land became such an important event that it is mentioned several times in the Bible. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children understand the importance of the cave of Machpelah.

Abraham Sent a Servant to Get a Wife for Isaac

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain the importance of the cave that Abraham bought as a place to bury Sarah when she died. As we come to chapter 24, we see that we have one other very important event in the life of Abraham as he made the arrangements to find a bride for Isaac.

Genesis 24:1-4 says, “Now Abraham was old, well advanced in age; and the Lord had blessed Abraham in all things. So Abraham said to the oldest servant of his house, who ruled over all that he had, ‘Please, put your hand under my thigh, and I will make you swear by the Lord, the God of heaven and the God of the earth, that you will not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell; but you shall go to my country and to my family, and take a wife for my son Isaac.’” We see that God said that Abraham was old and well advanced in age. Genesis 25:20 says, “Isaac was forty years old when he took Rebekah as wife, the daughter of Bethuel the Syrian of Padan Aram, the sister of Laban the Syrian.” The fact that Isaac was forty years old when he married means that Abraham was about a hundred and forty years old when he sent the servant to get a bride for Isaac. This means that it was approximately three years after the death of Sarah since we saw that she was a hundred and twenty-seven years old when she died.

The Lord had greatly blessed Abraham. He wanted Isaac to take a wife that had a similar background rather than a Canaanite wife. One day, Abraham called the oldest servant of his house. The word translated “that ruled over” means *to cause to rule or to give dominion over*. This meant that this servant was the steward who managed all of the business affairs of Abraham. Abraham had this servant take an oath that he would not get a wife for Isaac from among the Canaanites. In that day, we see that the usual way to make an oath was to place the hand under the thigh of the person who was giving the oath. Genesis 47:29-30 says, “When the time drew near that Israel must die, he called his son Joseph and said to him, ‘Now if I have found favor in your sight, please put your hand under my thigh, and deal kindly and truly with me. Please do not bury me in Egypt, but let me lie with my fathers; you shall carry me out of Egypt and bury me in their burial place.’ And he said, ‘I will do as you have said.’” In this case, Jacob was asking Joseph to promise to bury Jacob in the cave of Machpelah.

The promise that Abraham was asking the servant to make actually contained two parts. The first was not to take a wife for Isaac from the Canaanites. The second part was to go to the country where his family lived to get a wife from among the relatives there. In that time, a young man did not usually choose who he was going to marry. Instead, that decision was usually made by his father. A generation later, Isaac told Jacob in Genesis 28:1-2, “Then Isaac called Jacob and blessed him, and charged him, and said to him: ‘You shall not take a wife from the daughters of Canaan. Arise, go to Padan Aram, to the house of Bethuel your mother’s father; and take yourself a wife from there of the daughters of Laban your mother’s brother.’” Here, we see that Isaac sent Jacob back to the next generation of the same family to get a wife. In contrast, Genesis 26:34-35 tells us that Esau rebelled and chose two wives which brought great sorrow to his parents. Those verses say, “When Esau was forty years old, he took as wives Judith the daughter of Beeri the Hittite, and Basemath the daughter of Elon the Hittite. And they were a grief of mind to Isaac and Rebekah.”

The servant had one question for Abraham before he was ready to carry out the oath that Abraham was requesting him to make. Genesis 24:5 says, “And the servant said to him, ‘Perhaps the woman will not be willing to follow me to this land. Must I take your son back to

the land from which you came?” Here, we see that the servant had a very practical question since Abraham was asking him to go and get a wife that he did not know and had never seen. This also meant that the girl would not know the servant and had never seen either the servant or Isaac, the one who would become her future husband. Abraham understood the question of the servant; we will see that he said if the woman would not come, the servant would be free of the oath.

We see that the servant actually made a statement and then asked Abraham a question. The servant realized that this would be a very unusual situation and that is why he said, “Perhaps the woman will not be willing to follow me to this land.” The servant realized that he was being asked to go to a city that was four hundred and fifty miles away from the place where Abraham and Isaac were now living. He also realized that he would be a total stranger to the young woman. This oldest servant was probably Eliezer who was mentioned in Genesis 15:2 where we read, “But Abram said, ‘Lord God, what will You give me, seeing I go childless, and the heir of my house *is* Eliezer of Damascus?’” Since Abraham was seventy-five when he left his brother and family in Nahor and he was now a hundred and forty years old, that meant he had not seen any of the family members in Nahor for sixty-five years. That also meant his family had not seen any of the servants of Abraham for sixty-five years, so the servant knew that no one from Abraham’s relatives would recognize him.

That is why the servant asked the question, “Must I take your son back to the land from which you came?” Here, we see that the servant thought that the family would have to meet Isaac before they would consent to allow one of the girls from their family to be taken as a bride to marry a man that lived four hundred and fifty miles away that none of them had ever seen. We see the answer of Abraham in Genesis 24:6-9 where we read, “But Abraham said to him, ‘Beware that you do not take my son back there. The Lord God of heaven, who took me from my father’s house and from the land of my family, and who spoke to me and swore to me, saying, “To your descendants I give this land,” He will send His angel before you, and you shall take a wife for my son from there. And if the woman is not willing to follow you, then you will be released from this oath; only do not take my son back there.’ So the servant put his hand under the thigh of Abraham his master, and swore to him concerning this matter.” By this answer, we see again the faith of Abraham in God. We also see that the servant had developed a faith in God because of all of the things that he had learned from Abraham through the years.

Abraham did not want his son to be taken back to the city where his family lived. Abraham had believed the word that God had spoken to him that the Lord would give him this land. As a result, he had confidence that God would provide Isaac with a wife who would be willing to serve God in this land with Isaac, without Isaac having to leave the land of promise to return to the city where the family of Abraham was located. As a result, Abraham explained to the servant how God would work in the hearts of the family and the heart of the young woman. Abraham said that the Lord God of heaven would send His angel before the servant to prepare the hearts of the family and the heart of the young woman. It was going to take the servant a period of time to travel the four hundred and fifty miles by camel to that city. During the time the servant was traveling, Abraham expected the Lord to work through the angel to prepare the hearts of the family and the young woman.

Abraham shows us that he had a great understanding of the way that the Lord works in the hearts of people, even though the various books of the Bible had not yet been written. In the New Testament, Christ told the disciples in John 14:26, ““But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.”” We have seen in the previous chapters that the Lord spoke to Abraham many times. Sometimes, the Lord spoke to Abraham face to face (these were Old Testament appearances of Christ). Sometimes, the Lord spoke through an

angel. Abraham did not know how the angel would communicate the message to his family but he had faith that God would use an angel to prepare his family and the young woman for the arrival of the servant.

That is why Abraham expected the family to agree and the young woman to return with the servant and those with him when he returned to the land of Canaan. As a result, Abraham told the servant that the servant would be free of the oath if the young woman was not willing to travel with him to become the wife of Isaac. Abraham had complete confidence that the young woman would come with the servant to become the bride of Isaac. Abraham explained to the servant what he was to do if the woman was not willing to follow him. He told the servant that the servant would be released from the oath. Then, he told the servant what he was not to do. Abraham said that the servant was not to take Isaac back to the land of his relatives. God had said in Genesis 12:1, “Now the Lord had said to Abram: ‘Get out of your country, from your family and from your father’s house, to a land that I will show you.’” Abraham did not want his son to return to that land.

Once the servant got his question answered, we see in Genesis 24:9 that “...the servant put his hand under the thigh of Abraham his master, and swore to him concerning this matter.” The servant was satisfied because Abraham took the time to explain to the servant that he would not be under the oath if the woman was unwilling to leave her family and country and return with the servant as a bride for Isaac. Abraham gave us an example of the fact that we need to answer the questions of those that we lead so that they know why they are asked to do what we ask them to do. We will see in the coming topics how God rewarded the faith of Abraham and helped the servant to grow in his trust in the Lord.

We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to understand what the Lord teaches in His Word so that they can also learn to trust the Lord to work in the various situations in which He places them. Then, they will become effective servants of the Lord because they know that the Lord will guide them and work in their lives and through their lives as they trust and follow Him. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children that they can trust the Lord to work in and through their lives.

The Lord Led the Servant to the Family of Abraham

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn that they can trust the Lord to lead and guide them as they learn to trust the Word of God. In this topic, we are going to see how the Lord guided the servant of Abraham as he prayed for the guidance of the Lord.

The servant of Abraham had promised that he would go to the family of Abraham to find a bride for Isaac. Genesis 24:10-14 says, “Then the servant took ten of his master’s camels and departed, for all his master’s goods *were in* his hand. And he arose and went to Mesopotamia, to the city of Nahor. And he made his camels kneel down outside the city by a well of water at evening time, the time when women go out to draw *water*. Then he said, ‘O Lord God of my master Abraham, please give me success this day, and show kindness to my master Abraham. Behold, *here* I stand by the well of water, and the daughters of the men of the city are coming out to draw water. Now let it be that the young woman to whom I say, “Please let down your pitcher that I may drink,” and she says, “Drink, and I will also give your camels a drink”—*let her be the one* You have appointed for Your servant Isaac. And by this I will know that You have shown kindness to my master.’” Here, we see that the servant left and traveled the four hundred and fifty miles to the city where part of the family of Abraham lived. That city was named Nahor, which was also the name of the brother of Abraham.

The servant came to the city and made the camels kneel down outside the city near the well that provided water for the city. The servant and those with him had arrived in the evening at the time that the women came out to the well to draw water for their families. Then, the servant of Abraham began to pray. The prayer of the servant teaches us several things about prayer. First, the prayer of the servant was to the Lord God of his master. This meant that the servant had learned to trust God from his master. Second, the prayer was a request as the servant asked the Lord to give him success. Third, the servant asked the Lord to show kindness to his master. Fourth, the servant said that he was standing by the well and the women were coming out to draw water. Fifth, the servant gave the Lord a specific request. He asked the Lord to lead him to the woman of whom he should request water. Sixth, the servant requested that the woman would also offer to water his camels. Seventh, the servant asked the Lord to show him if this was the woman who the Lord had appointed as a wife for Isaac. These things that the servant mentioned in his prayer show that we are able to talk to the Lord about the things that we face daily in our lives. The Lord wants to answer our specific needs.

The servant trusted the Lord to show kindness to his master. Genesis 24:15-17 goes on to tell us that the Lord had led the servant to the family of Abraham’s brother, Nahor. Those verses say, “And it happened, before he had finished speaking, that behold, Rebekah, who was born to Bethuel, son of Milcah, the wife of Nahor, Abraham’s brother, came out with her pitcher on her shoulder. Now the young woman *was* very beautiful to behold, a virgin; no man had known her. And she went down to the well, filled her pitcher, and came up. And the servant ran to meet her and said, ‘Please let me drink a little water from your pitcher.’”

In these verses, we see that sometimes the Lord answers our prayers very quickly. In this case, we see that the Lord was already answering his prayer even before the servant had started praying. In fact, the servant was still praying as Rebekah came walking to the well. This meant that she had left her home at least a few minutes before the servant started praying. Since the Lord knows our hearts, He is already working long before we start praying. We then are told how Rebekah was related to Isaac. Nahor was the brother of Abraham. Bethuel was the son of

Nahor and Milcah. That made Bethuel a cousin of Isaac. Then, we see that Rebekah was the daughter of Bethuel. That means that Isaac was her second cousin. Rebekah came walking with the pitcher on her shoulder at the moment that the servant was praying. Two things are immediately mentioned about Rebekah. First, she was very beautiful. Second, she was a virgin because no man had known her. This meant that she was both beautiful in her physical appearance and also a woman of moral integrity who was a virgin. The destruction of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah and the other surrounding cities made it very clear that the Canaanites in the land of Canaan were not known for their moral integrity. That was the very reason that Abraham had sent his servant to get a wife from among his own relatives.

We see that the women had to go down some steps to get to the well, which meant that they had to carry the water up the steps before they could even begin the walk back to their homes. As a result, we see that Rebekah filled her pitcher and then came up the steps from the well. It was as she reached the top of the steps that the servant ran to meet her. We see that he then made a request of Rebekah. The servant asked if he could drink a little water from her pitcher. Proper treatment of visitors to any of the cities in that area meant that a resident of the city would show hospitality by providing water to a stranger. As a result, it was proper for Rebekah to give a stranger some water to drink.

However, the servant had prayed for much more. In Genesis 24:14, the servant had prayed that she would say, “...Drink, and I will also give your camels a drink”—let her be the one You have appointed for Your servant Isaac. And by this I will know that You have shown kindness to my master.” That is a large request because a camel can drink up to twenty-five gallons and the servant had ten camels. That meant that to water the camels, Rebekah would have to offer to draw water from the well and carry it up the steps. That is a lot of work because two hundred and fifty gallons would be about two thousand pounds of water. That would mean going up and down those steps many times. We see how the Lord answered that prayer as Genesis 24:18-21 says, “So she said, ‘Drink, my lord.’ Then she quickly let her pitcher down to her hand, and gave him a drink. And when she had finished giving him a drink, she said, ‘I will draw *water* for your camels also, until they have finished drinking.’ Then she quickly emptied her pitcher into the trough, ran back to the well to draw *water*, and drew for all his camels. And the man, wondering at her, remained silent so as to know whether the Lord had made his journey prosperous or not.” These verses tell us the choice that Rebekah made that day.

We see that Rebekah quickly took her pitcher off her shoulder and gave the servant a drink of the water. However, she did much more when the servant had finished drinking all of the water that he wanted. She told the servant, “I will draw water for your camels also, until they have finished drinking.” This was exactly what the servant had requested as he prayed to the Lord. He realized that the camels could drink as much as two hundred and fifty gallons of water. The servant knew that was a lot of water to carry up the steps from the well. However, he also knew that God could fulfill his request even though it meant a lot of hard and heavy work for the young woman. The servant had prayed a very specific request and we see that the Lord led Rebekah to offer to fulfill that prayer, even though she did not know what the servant had prayed.

Rebekah immediately began to carry out her offer to the servant. She dumped the rest of the water in her pitcher into the trough so that the camels could begin to drink and then ran back to the well to fill her pitcher again. She carried many pitchers of water up from the well and emptied them into the trough where the camels were drinking. This is a reminder of the fact that the Lord had already prepared the heart of Rebekah, even though she did not yet know the reason that the servant had come to her city. Later, we see that the servant gave all glory to God as he told Rebekah in Genesis 24:27, “And he said, ‘Blessed *be* the Lord God of my master Abraham, who has not forsaken His mercy and His truth toward my master. As for me,

being on the way, the Lord led me to the house of my master's brethren.” This verse makes it clear that the servant recognized the fact that God was leading him even while he was on the way to this city.

While Rebekah was getting the water from the well and carrying it to the trough, we see that the servant stood and watched in silent amazement. The word that is translated “wondering” means *to gaze at or watch with wonder or amazement*. The same thing often happens in the lives of Christians. We pray and make a specific request to the Lord and then are amazed when God answers. An illustration of this is given in the book of Acts when Peter had been arrested and was to be killed the next day. Acts 12:15-16 says, “But they said to her, ‘You are beside yourself!’ Yet she kept insisting that it was so. So they said, ‘It is his angel.’ Now Peter continued knocking; and when they opened *the door* and saw him, they were astonished.” The Christians prayed for Peter but then were amazed when the Lord released him from prison and he came to the door of the house.

In the case of the servant, he just stood there in silence. He was watching to see if the Lord was going to continue to answer his prayer in the exact way that he had prayed. The word translated “prosperous” means *to succeed, to be profitable or to prosper*. The servant used this word several times as he talked to the family of Rebekah. After the servant made his request to the family, they wanted Rebekah to stay at least ten days. The servant answered in Genesis 24:56-58, “And he said to them, ‘Do not hinder me, since the Lord has prospered my way; send me away so that I may go to my master.’ So they said, ‘We will call the young woman and ask her personally.’ Then they called Rebekah and said to her, ‘Will you go with this man?’ And she said, ‘I will go.’” In this statement of the servant and the response of Rebekah, we see that it truly was the Lord who had arranged all of the details and prepared the heart of Rebekah before the servant even arrived. We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain to others how the Lord works in the hearts of others to prepare them to answer prayers. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to explain this important lesson.

The Servant was Received by the Family of Abraham

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain how the Lord works in the hearts of people to prepare them to answer our prayers or the prayers of others. In this topic, we will see that the servant was invited to spend the night with the family of Rebekah.

We saw that the servant had watched with amazement as he saw how God answered the prayer that he had prayed. Now, we are going to see that the servant asked Rebekah what family she belonged to and if there was room for him to stay at the house of her family. In Genesis 24:22-25, we read, “So it was, when the camels had finished drinking, that the man took a golden nose ring weighing half a shekel, and two bracelets for her wrists weighing ten *shekels* of gold, and said, ‘Whose daughter *are* you? Tell me, please, is there room *in* your father’s house for us to lodge?’ So she said to him, ‘I *am* the daughter of Bethuel, Milcah’s son, whom she bore to Nahor.’ Moreover she said to him, ‘We have both straw and feed enough, and room to lodge.’” We see what happened when all of the camels had finished drinking water and their thirst was satisfied.

We see that when the camels were finished drinking, the servant gave Rebekah a gift. That gift included a golden nose ring and two bracelets for her wrists. We saw in our last topic that a shekel was a weight of about half an ounce. As a result, the nose ring was about a quarter of an ounce of gold. The two bracelets contained about five ounces of gold. This would be valued at several thousand dollars today, so this was a rather expensive gift the servant gave to Rebekah. Then, the servant asked Rebekah two questions. First, he asked her from what family she came. Second, he asked if there was room in the house of her father for the servant and the other servants with him to stay that night. We see how Rebekah answered both questions.

First, she told them about her family. She said that she was the daughter of Bethuel. Then, she added that Bethuel was a son of Nahor and Milcah. Abraham had been told in Genesis 22:20-24, “Now it came to pass after these things that it was told Abraham, saying, ‘Indeed Milcah also has borne children to your brother Nahor: Huz his firstborn, Buz his brother, Kemuel the father of Aram, Chesed, Hazo, Pildash, Jidlaph, and Bethuel.’ And Bethuel begot Rebekah. These eight Milcah bore to Nahor, Abraham’s brother. His concubine, whose name was Reumah, also bore Tebah, Gaham, Thahash, and Maachah.” Abraham had learned that his brother, Nahor, had twelve children. Eight of these had been born to his wife and then his concubine had given birth to four additional children.

Second, Rebekah told the servant that her father had room for the servants of Abraham to stay at their house. She said that this included plenty of straw and feed for the camels. Then, she said that there was room for the servants to stay. We see how the servant responded to the two questions that Rebekah had answered. Genesis 25:26-28 says, “Then the man bowed down his head and worshiped the Lord. And he said, ‘Blessed *be* the Lord God of my master Abraham, who has not forsaken His mercy and His truth toward my master. As for me, being on the way, the Lord led me to the house of my master’s brethren.’ So the young woman ran and told her mother’s household these things.” We see that the very first thing that the servant did was bow down his head and worship the Lord.

The word translated “worshiped” means *to bow down or bow before God in worship*. This is a key word to understand as many people do not understand what it means to worship. This means that true worship recognizes the greatness of God and the fact that He is the One who

has all authority over our lives. John 4:23-24 says, “‘But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God *is* Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.’” Here, we see that we are to worship God in our spirit and we are to worship Him according to truth. We see that the servant showed that he was bowing his head and heart before God by the words that he spoke as he prayed.

First, the servant worshiped by describing some things about the character of God. He realized first of all, that He was the Lord God of his master and that all blessing belonged to Him. Second, the servant recognized that God is a God of mercy. Psalm 103:11-12 says, “‘For as the heavens are high above the earth, *so* great is His mercy toward those who fear Him; as far as the east is from the west, *so* far has He removed our transgressions from us.’” These verses show us that the mercy of God is great to all those who fear and reverence Him. They also show that his mercy is revealed by the fact that He removed our sins as far as the east is from the west. Third, the servant recognized that God is a God of truth. We see that God’s truth extends forever. Psalm 146:5-6 says, “‘Happy *is he* who *has* the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope *is* in the Lord his God, who made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that *is* in them; who keeps truth forever.’”

Second, the servant worshiped the Lord for the way that the Lord had led him. The word translated “way” means *the road, journey or way*. The servant had traveled more than four hundred and fifty miles. In addition to leading the servant to the right city, the servant said that the Lord had led him to the house of his master’s brethren. God had worked in such a way that the first person the servant met when he came to the city was the very woman that God had planned to be the wife of Isaac. This is a reminder of the fact that we can always depend on the Lord to lead us. The Lord promises in Proverbs 3:5-6, “‘Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths.’” He will always lead us to the path that He has prepared for us as we follow Him instead of depending on our own wisdom.

When the servant had worshiped the Lord, Rebekah ran to tell her family about all that had happened while she was at the well. Genesis 24:29-33 goes on to say, “‘Now Rebekah had a brother whose name *was* Laban, and Laban ran out to the man by the well. So it came to pass, when he saw the nose ring, and the bracelets on his sister’s wrists, and when he heard the words of his sister Rebekah, saying, ‘Thus the man spoke to me,’ that he went to the man. And there he stood by the camels at the well. And he said, ‘Come in, O blessed of the Lord! Why do you stand outside? For I have prepared the house, and a place for the camels.’ Then the man came to the house. And he unloaded the camels, and provided straw and feed for the camels, and water to wash his feet and the feet of the men who *were* with him. *Food* was set before him to eat, but he said, ‘I will not eat until I have told about my errand.’ And he said, ‘Speak on.’”

Laban, the brother of Rebekah, ran out to the servant who was still standing by the well. From what we learn later in the book of Genesis, he did not have the same attitude as Rebekah but was looking out for himself. The first thing that is mentioned that he noticed was the nose ring and the bracelets the servant had given to Rebekah. He probably realized that the value of the gold meant that the servant served a rich master. He also heard Rebekah tell what the servant had said to her at the well and that only increased his interest to help this servant who had talked to his sister. Laban called the servant “blessed of the Lord”. He asked the servant why he was still standing outside. Then, he said that he had prepared the house for the servant and the men with him. He had also prepared a place for the camels.

We see that then the servant came to the house. In Genesis 24:11, we read, “‘And he made his camels kneel down outside the city by a well of water at evening time, the time when women go

out to draw *water*.” From this statement, we see that the servant, the camels and the men with him had traveled all day across the desert. First, the servant unloaded the camels. Laban provided straw and feed to the servant for the camels so that the camels could eat and rest. Once the camels had been fed, the servant and the other servants with him could think about their own needs. Then, Laban brought water so that the servant and the other men with him could wash their feet after their day of travel across the desert. Meanwhile, someone had been preparing the evening meal so that they could all eat together.

The servant and those with him were probably very hungry after traveling all day. However, the servant did not think about his own needs first. Instead, his first thought was to carry out the will of Isaac and tell the family why he had come to their city. As a result, the servant said, “I will not eat until I have told about my errand.” Here, we see a servant who was focused on carrying out the will of his master. Many years later, Christ showed that same focus in His ministry. Jesus said in John 4:34, “Jesus said to them, ‘My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work’” Both the servant and Christ give us an example to follow in our own lives. Galatians 5:1 says that we have been called to liberty. Then, Galatians 5:13 says, “For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not *use* liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.” That liberty is not an excuse to sin because we have been set free from the bondage of sin. Instead, that liberty makes it possible for us to serve others and show others the love of Christ by our actions.

Then, the family told the servant, “Speak on.” In the next topic, we will see what the servant said. We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn how to carry out the will of God just as the servant was focused on carrying out the will of Abraham. In order for our children to develop that focus, we need to provide an example by making the will of God the focus of our lives. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children by your example the importance of carrying out the will of God in your own life.

The Servant Explained Why He had Come

In our last topic, we saw that we want to show our physical and spiritual children the importance of carrying out the will of God in our own lives. The servant of Abraham had shown his desire to carry out the will of Abraham by saying that he would not even eat until he had told the family of Rebekah why he had come. In this topic, we will see what the servant told the family of Rebekah.

First, the servant told the family why Abraham had sent him. Genesis 24:34-41 says, “So he said, “*I am* Abraham’s servant. The Lord has blessed my master greatly, and he has become great; and He has given him flocks and herds, silver and gold, male and female servants, and camels and donkeys. And Sarah my master’s wife bore a son to my master when she was old; and to him he has given all that he has. Now my master made me swear, saying, “You shall not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, in whose land I dwell; but you shall go to my father’s house and to my family, and take a wife for my son.” And I said to my master, “Perhaps the woman will not follow me.” But he said to me, “The Lord, before whom I walk, will send His angel with you and prosper your way; and you shall take a wife for my son from my family and from my father’s house. You will be clear from this oath when you arrive among my family; for if they will not give *her* to you, then you will be released from my oath.”” We see that the servant began by talking about his master.

The servant identified himself as the servant of Abraham. Then, he told them how the Lord had worked in the life of Abraham since Abraham had left that area more than 60 years earlier. The Lord had blessed Abraham in many ways over those years. He had become great in the sight of both God and the people in the area where he lived. The Lord had blessed him with flocks and herds. The Lord had blessed him with riches of silver and gold. This blessing also included both male and female servants. The Lord had given him camels and donkeys. Here, we see that the Lord had blessed him with riches. However, that was not the important thing in the life of Abraham.

The most important thing that the Lord had done for Abraham was to give Abraham and Sarah a son in their old age. Abraham did not keep the riches for himself but had passed them all on to his son. Then, he went on to tell the family of Rebekah that the purpose of his trip to their city was to get a wife for Isaac. The servant said that Abraham had told him not to get a wife from among the Canaanites. God had told Abraham in Genesis 15:16, ““But in the fourth generation they shall return here, for the iniquity of the Amorites *is* not yet complete.”” The Amorites and the other descendants of Canaan had not followed the Lord but had become very sinful. We saw how the people of the land had destroyed the testimony of Lot even though Peter tells us in 2 Peter that Lot was a righteous man (one who was right with God). Then, the servant said that was why Abraham had sent him to the city of Nahor. He had come to get a wife for Isaac. The servant had told Abraham that the woman might not want to go with him. Abraham had told him that the Lord would send an angel before him and prosper his way and provide a wife from his father’s house. Otherwise, he would be released from the oath that Abraham had asked him to make. The servant was looking for God to lead him to the woman that God had appointed for the wife of Isaac.

Second, the servant told the family what he had prayed at the well. Genesis 24:42-44 says, ““And this day I came to the well and said, “O Lord God of my master Abraham, if You will now prosper the way in which I go, behold, I stand by the well of water; and it shall come to pass that when the virgin comes out to draw *water*, and I say to her, ‘Please give me a little

water from your pitcher to drink,’ and she says to me, ‘Drink, and I will draw for your camels also,’—let her be the woman whom the Lord has appointed for my master’s son.’”” The servant told the family exactly what he had prayed as he stood by the well. First, he had made his request to the Lord. In this request, he made it clear that he prayed to the Lord God who was the God that Abraham already had served who had led him to depart from Nahor to the land of Canaan. The servant had asked God to prosper him in his mission as he stood by the well.

He also told the family that he had been very specific in his request to the Lord. The servant knew that the daughters of all of the men of the city would be coming out to the well to draw water for their families. As a result, he prayed that the woman to whom the Lord would lead him would be the young woman that the Lord wanted to be the wife of Isaac. The servant wanted the family to know that the Lord was the One who had led him to Rebekah to make his request for a drink of water. However, to make it even clearer that she was the one who the Lord had for Isaac, he prayed that she would give a specific response. That response was in addition to just giving him a drink of water. The servant said that he had prayed that the woman would respond, “Drink, and I will draw for your camels also.” This response required much more than just giving the servant a drink of water because it meant that the young woman had to make a specific response.

The servant told the family that the young woman who volunteered to water his camels would be the way that God would show clearly that she was to be the woman whom the Lord had appointed to become the wife for his master’s son. Then, the servant told the family how Rebekah had answered his prayer. Genesis 24:45-49 says, “‘But before I had finished speaking in my heart, there was Rebekah, coming out with her pitcher on her shoulder; and she went down to the well and drew *water*. And I said to her, “Please let me drink.” And she made haste and let her pitcher down from her *shoulder*, and said, “Drink, and I will give your camels a drink also.” So I drank, and she gave the camels a drink also. Then I asked her, and said, “Whose daughter *are* you?” And she said, “The daughter of Bethuel, Nahor’s son, whom Milcah bore to him.” So I put the nose ring on her nose and the bracelets on her wrists. And I bowed my head and worshiped the Lord, and blessed the Lord God of my master Abraham, who had led me in the way of truth to take the daughter of my master’s brother for his son. Now if you will deal kindly and truly with my master, tell me. And if not, tell me, that I may turn to the right hand or to the left.’” Then, the servant told the family one more key point. He said that before he finished speaking the prayer in his heart, Rebekah had come out carrying a pitcher.

Here, we see that the prayer was in his heart and was not a prayer that was spoken with a voice that could be heard by another person. The servant may not have understood the various ministries of the Holy Spirit but Romans 8:26-27 says, “Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit *is*, because He makes intercession for the saints according to *the will of God*.” This prayer in the heart of the servant was according to the will of God.

The servant then said that Rebekah had done exactly as he had prayed. She gave the servant a drink and then also drew water for all of the camels so that they could drink. The servant said that his next question was, “Whose daughter are you?” Here, we see that the servant wanted to find out if the Lord had led him to the right family. Rebekah told the servant that she was the daughter of Bethuel and the granddaughter of Nahor. When the servant heard this information, he knew that the Lord had led him to the right family. Then, the servant told the family about his response when he found out that Rebekah was from the family of Nahor. He immediately

put a gold nose ring in her nose and two gold bracelets on her wrists.

Before doing anything else, the servant said that he bowed his head and worshiped the Lord. Here, we are reminded that prayer is one of the ways that we worship God. The servant said that he blessed the Lord God of his master, Abraham. He recognized that it was totally the work of God to lead him in the way of truth. The word translated “truth” is most frequently used in the book of Psalms. Psalm 19:9 says, “The fear of the Lord *is* clean, enduring forever; the judgments of the Lord *are* true *and* righteous altogether.” In this verse, the word talks about the judgments of the Lord and says that they are true. Then, Psalm 119:160 adds, “The entirety of Your word *is* truth, and every one of Your righteous judgments *endures* forever.” Here, we see the entire Word of God is truth. As we look at these verses, we see that in his worship the servant made it clear that the Word of God is truth and that the Lord had led him by that truth.

As a result, the next statement of the servant was a marriage proposal for Rebekah from Abraham on behalf of Isaac, his son. The answer to this question was certain to have a major effect on the family of Abraham throughout the rest of the history of his descendants. The servant wanted to know if the family and Rebekah would respond with the same attitude toward the truth of the Word of God or if he needed to turn to the right or the left to seek some other relative from among the other descendants of Nahor. The very first principle God established for Adam is given in Genesis 2:24 where we read, “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.” This was not a principle for Adam and Eve because they had no father or mother to leave. However, it was a principle for all of their descendants. Her family, along with Rebekah, had to decide if they were going to allow Rebekah to leave their family knowing that they probably would not see her again on this earth. We will see in the next topic how they decided this question. Here, we see that we want to teach our physical and spiritual children the importance of understanding and applying this principle in their own lives as they think about marriage. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to apply this principle in their lives.

The Servant Returned with a Bride for Isaac

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to apply the first principle that God gave after He created Eve and brought her to Adam. We saw that the family of Rebekah was asked to make the decision about whether to let Rebekah leave their home to marry a man that none of them had ever met. In this topic, we will learn about the decision that was made.

Genesis 24:50-56 says, “Then Laban and Bethuel answered and said, ‘The thing comes from the Lord; we cannot speak to you either bad or good. Here *is* Rebekah before you; take her and go, and let her be your master’s son’s wife, as the Lord has spoken.’ And it came to pass, when Abraham’s servant heard their words, that he worshiped the Lord, *bowing himself* to the earth. Then the servant brought out jewelry of silver, jewelry of gold, and clothing, and gave *them* to Rebekah. He also gave precious things to her brother and to her mother. And he and the men who *were* with him ate and drank and stayed all night. Then they arose in the morning, and he said, ‘Send me away to my master.’ But her brother and her mother said, ‘Let the young woman stay with us *a few* days, at least ten; after that she may go.’ And he said to them, ‘Do not hinder me, since the Lord has prospered my way; send me away so that I may go to my master.’” We see that the family recognized that God was the One who is in control.

The brother and father both said that this was the work of the Lord to arrange all of these details and to answer the prayer of the servant in the way that the Lord answered. Both the father and the brother agreed that this was the work of God and that the servant should take Rebekah as a wife for Isaac. They felt that the Lord had clearly spoken. We also see that the brother became the one who began to speak for the family. We see the immediate response of the servant as he bowed to the earth and worshiped God. With the words of the brother and father, the servant could see that the Lord had prepared their hearts to carry out the plan of the Lord for a wife for Isaac.

The servant also did two other things before they all ate together. First, the servant brought out jewelry of silver and gold as well as clothing for Rebekah. These were gifts from Abraham and Isaac for the future bride that the Lord had for Isaac. Second, the servant gave precious things to the mother and brother of Rebekah. This would have been the dowry. In that day, a dowry was a gift given by the family of the groom to the family of the bride as a payment for the wife. When this gift was received by the family of the future bride, it meant that they had officially promised the bride to the family of the future husband. Genesis 34:12 says, “‘Ask me ever so much dowry and gift, and I will give according to what you say to me; but give me the young woman as a wife.’” In this verse, Shechem offered to pay whatever dowry would be required by Jacob in order to purchase Dinah as his wife. However, the servant took the leadership and gave the dowry to the family of Bethuel without being asked. It was probably much more than the family ever expected as the servant gave those precious things to the brother and mother.

The next morning, the servant asked the family to send him on his way so that he could return to his master immediately. That came as a shock to the family and the brother and mother asked if he could wait at least ten days. The servant said that he did not want to be hindered from returning to his master. Then, the brother and mother said they would ask Rebekah. We see that Rebekah said that she would go immediately as the bride for Isaac. Genesis 24:57-61 says, “So they said, ‘We will call the young woman and ask her personally.’ Then they called Rebekah and said to her, ‘Will you go with this man?’ And she said, ‘I will go.’ So they sent away Rebekah their sister and her nurse, and Abraham’s servant and his men. And they blessed

Rebekah and said to her: ‘Our sister, *may you become the mother of thousands of ten thousands; and may your descendants possess the gates of those who hate them.*’ Then Rebekah and her maids arose, and they rode on the camels and followed the man. So the servant took Rebekah and departed.” We see that Rebekah, her nurse and her maids had their lives changed dramatically in just the short period of one day.

The family wanted Rebekah to stay for a few days longer. However, we see that Rebekah was ready to go immediately with the servant to become the bride of Isaac. As the family sent Rebekah away, the brother gave her a blessing. The blessing that he gave to Rebekah was similar to the promise that the Lord had originally given to Abraham. First, he said, “May you become the mother of thousands of ten thousands.” God had promised Abraham that his descendants would be as the sand on the seashore. The phrase “thousands of ten thousands” was a phrase that was used to describe a number that was too large to count. Second, he said, “May your descendants possess the gates of those who hate them.” This was a phrase that was used in a blessing to say that a nation would have victory over their enemies that tried to destroy them. There were many nations that tried to destroy the descendants of Isaac and Rebekah. When the descendants were following the Lord, He gave them victory over many enemies.

Once Rebekah announced her decision to go with the servant to meet her future husband, she was ready to go. We do see that she did not go alone as it says that her nurse and her maids went with her. The word translated “nurse” can either refer to *one who nurses a baby or one older who served and cared for another*. Genesis 35:8 says, “Now Deborah, Rebekah’s nurse, died, and she was buried below Bethel under the terebinth tree. So the name of it was called Allon Bachuth.” This verse tells us that the name of the one who served and cared for Rebekah was Deborah and she died many years after she went with Rebekah. The word translated “maids” was usually used to speak of *a young woman who was of marriageable age or of a female attendant who served one who was a little older than the maid*. In this case, it would refer to those who served Rebekah.

We go on to see what happened when Isaac met and married Rebekah. Genesis 24:62-67 says, “Now Isaac came from the way of Beer Lahai Roi, for he dwelt in the South. And Isaac went out to meditate in the field in the evening; and he lifted his eyes and looked, and there, the camels *were* coming. Then Rebekah lifted her eyes, and when she saw Isaac she dismounted from her camel; for she had said to the servant, ‘Who *is* this man walking in the field to meet us?’ The servant said, ‘It *is* my master.’ So she took a veil and covered herself. And the servant told Isaac all the things that he had done. Then Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah’s tent; and he took Rebekah and she became his wife, and he loved her. So Isaac was comforted after his mother’s *death*.” We see how Rebekah met Isaac when they arrived back in the land of Canaan.

Isaac was living in the south part of the land when the servant returned. Genesis 25:11 tells us that after the death of Abraham, Isaac lived at Beer Lahai Roi. This place is first mentioned in Genesis 16:13-14 when Hagar named this place. Those verses say, “Then she called the name of the Lord who spoke to her, You-Are-the-God-Who-Sees; for she said, ‘Have I also here seen Him who sees me?’ Therefore the well was called Beer Lahai Roi; observe, *it is* between Kadesh and Bered.” Hagar had fled to this place when Sarah told Abraham to cast out the bondwoman and her son because he was making fun of Isaac on the day that he was weaned. That is why Hagar called both God and the well where God spoke to her “You-Are-the-God-Who-Sees”.

The servant and those with him arrived back at the place where Abraham and Isaac were living in the evening. Isaac had gone out into the field in the evening to meditate. As he was out in

the field, he could see a caravan of camels coming in his direction. As the camels got closer, Rebekah saw Isaac in the distance and said to the servant, “Who is this man walking in the field to meet us?” The servant answered, “It is my master.” Rebekah realized that she was about to meet the man who would soon become her husband. In that day, a man was not supposed to see the face of his future wife until after the wedding. As a result, Rebekah took a veil and covered her face. Then, she dismounted from her camel so that she could meet Isaac. Meanwhile, the servant had begun talking with Isaac and told him all of the things that had happened while he was away. This included the trip, the prayer of the servant at the well, the answer of God to his prayer, the invitation to the home of the family, and everything else that had happened, so that Isaac heard how the Lord had worked to provide a wife for him.

Then, Isaac brought her to the tent of his mother, Sarah. Since she had a veil over her face, Isaac did not see the face of his wife until after they were married. As a result, this marriage was not based on appearance since Isaac learned at the wedding that Rebekah was beautiful. We also learn a very important lesson about marriage. We see that Isaac loved Rebekah. Love is not a feeling because feelings can change. These verses show us that marriage is based on a commitment to love the other person. Many years later, Paul wrote in Ephesians 5:28, “So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself.” A marriage will only be strong when it is based on a commitment to love rather than outward appearance. We see that Isaac was comforted by this marriage after the death of Sarah. This marriage happened almost three years after Sarah died. This is a reminder that the grieving period may be an extended time for those who have lost loved ones.

This passage has a very important lesson to teach our physical and spiritual children. That lesson is the fact that all godly marriages must be based on commitment and not just on physical appearance. Rebekah and Isaac both made a commitment to love one another before they even knew each other. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to teach others that godly marriages are based on commitment.

The Death and Burial of Abraham

In our last topic, we saw the importance of teaching our physical and spiritual children that godly marriages are always based on commitment to love the partner and not just physical appearance. In this topic, we will learn about the death and burial of Abraham.

Genesis 25:1-6 says, “Abraham again took a wife, and her name *was* Keturah. And she bore him Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak, and Shuah. Jokshan begot Sheba and Dedan. And the sons of Dedan were Asshurim, Letushim, and Leummim. And the sons of Midian *were* Ephah, Epher, Hanoah, Abidah, and Eldaah. All these *were* the children of Keturah. And Abraham gave all that he had to Isaac. But Abraham gave gifts to the sons of the concubines which Abraham had; and while he was still living he sent them eastward, away from Isaac his son, to the country of the east.” We see that Abraham took another wife. In 1 Chronicles 1:32, we see that she is called a concubine. The first part of that verse says, “Now the sons born to Keturah, Abraham’s concubine...” The rest of that verse and the following verse have the same list of names of sons and grandsons that are found here in verses two through four.

The descendants of Hagar through Ishmael, the descendants of Keturah, and the descendants of Esau, the brother of Jacob, all became the early fathers of the Arabs. As a result, many of the Arabs are also descendants of Abraham. That is why Genesis 21:12 becomes such an important verse as that verse says, “But God said to Abraham, ‘Do not let it be displeasing in your sight because of the lad or because of your bondwoman. Whatever Sarah has said to you, listen to her voice; for in Isaac your seed shall be called.’” Since Hagar and Keturah are both called concubines, they both had a lower status than Sarah. That also meant that their descendants did not have the same status. The servant had earlier told the family of Rebekah in Genesis 24:36, “‘And Sarah my master’s wife bore a son to my master when she was old; and to him he has given all that he has.’”

We see that Abraham chose to make this fact very clear before his death. That is why verse six says, “But Abraham gave gifts to the sons of the concubines which Abraham had; and while he was still living he sent them eastward, away from Isaac his son, to the country of the east.” By giving gifts to the descendants of Keturah and then sending them away to the east, they were no longer in that area at the time Abraham died to even try and claim a part of the inheritance. Although there was no conflict between Isaac and the sons of the concubines before their deaths, many of the descendants of the concubines later had conflicts with the descendants of Isaac. In fact, that conflict still continues today.

We go on to read in Genesis 25:7-11, “This *is* the sum of the years of Abraham’s life which he lived: one hundred and seventy-five years. Then Abraham breathed his last and died in a good old age, an old man and full of *years*, and was gathered to his people. And his sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah, which *is* before Mamre, in the field of Ephron the son of Zohar the Hittite, the field which Abraham purchased from the sons of Heth. There Abraham was buried, and Sarah his wife. And it came to pass, after the death of Abraham, that God blessed his son Isaac. And Isaac dwelt at Beer Lahai Roi.” Since Abraham was one hundred thirty-seven years old when Sarah died, this meant that Abraham lived thirty-eight more years after the death of Sarah.

We have a description of both the life and the death of Abraham. His life is described by several thoughts. We see that he “died in a good old age.” We see that he was considered “an old man and full of years” by the time that he died. This means that the lives of the people were

now much shorter than the lives of those who lived before the flood. His death was also mentioned in a different way because we read that “he was gathered to his people.” This is an important statement because Christ told the Sadducees in Mark 12:26-27, “‘But concerning the dead, that they rise, have you not read in the book of Moses, in the *burning bush passage*, how God spoke to him, saying, “I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob”? He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living. You are therefore greatly mistaken.” Physical death for all true followers of God means that we are gathered with those who have gone before because 2 Corinthians 5:8 says, “We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.” Both Old and New Testament saints are alive and present with the Lord. In contrast, all unbelievers are in Hades in physical torment. Luke 16:22-23 says, “‘So it was that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels to Abraham’s bosom. The rich man also died and was buried. And being in torments in Hades, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.’”

Since the sons of Keturah had been sent away before his death, only Isaac and Ishmael were still in that region when Abraham died. We see that they took the body of Abraham and buried it with the body of Sarah in the cave of Machpelah. This was the cave that Abraham had purchased from Ephron thirty-eight years earlier when Sarah had died. This would later become the burial place of Isaac and Rebekah as well as Jacob and Leah. That was the only piece of land that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob owned at the times of their deaths and so that was where they were all buried.

We also see that the Lord blessed Isaac after the death of Abraham just as He had blessed Abraham. We also see that Isaac lived at Beer Lahai Roi. This was the place where Isaac had married Rebekah as Genesis 24:62 says, “Now Isaac came from the way of Beer Lahai Roi, for he dwelt in the South.” The following verses tell us that he was meditating out in the field in that area at the servant arrived with Rebekah. Since it was Isaac and Ishmael that buried Abraham, the following verses give us a summary of the family of Ishmael. Genesis 25:12-18 say, “Now this *is* the genealogy of Ishmael, Abraham’s son, whom Hagar the Egyptian, Sarah’s maidservant, bore to Abraham. And these *were* the names of the sons of Ishmael, by their names, according to their generations: The firstborn of Ishmael, Nebajoth; then Kedar, Adbeel, Mibsam, Mishma, Dumah, Massa, Hadar, Tema, Jetur, Naphish, and Kedemah. These *were* the sons of Ishmael and these *were* their names, by their towns and their settlements, twelve princes according to their nations. These *were* the years of the life of Ishmael: one hundred and thirty-seven years; and he breathed his last and died, and was gathered to his people. (They dwelt from Havilah as far as Shur, which *is* east of Egypt as you go toward Assyria.) He died in the presence of all his brethren.”

In this summary of the family of Ishmael, we see that God kept His promise to Hagar. Genesis 16:9-11 says, “The Angel of the Lord said to her, ‘Return to your mistress, and submit yourself under her hand.’ Then the Angel of the Lord said to her, ‘I will multiply your descendants exceedingly, so that they shall not be counted for multitude.’ And the Angel of the Lord said to her: ‘Behold, you *are* with child, and you shall bear a son. You shall call his name Ishmael, because the Lord has heard your affliction.’” The Lord also made a similar promise about Ishmael to Abraham when He said in Genesis 17:20-21, “‘And as for Ishmael, I have heard you. Behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly. He shall beget twelve princes, and I will make him a great nation. But My covenant I will establish with Isaac, whom Sarah shall bear to you at this set time next year.’” We see that God fulfilled both of these promises.

In this summary, we see the names of the twelve sons of Ishmael. We also see that towns and settlements were named after each of these sons of Ishmael. These towns and their settlements were scattered across a wide area to the south and east of the land of Canaan. These settlements

developed into various tribes that intermarried and eventually became a part of the people from which the Arabs descended. The original towns and their settlements were located in areas on what is today the Sinai Peninsula, the Arabian Peninsula, and then north as far as Assyria, which would be in the present country of northern Iraq. Those settlements on the eastern side would also be the area where the descendants of Keturah went. As a result, through the years, there was also intermarriage with them, so they too are part of the people from which the Arabs descended.

Moses wrote the books of Genesis through Deuteronomy during the time that Israel was traveling through the wilderness. As a result, Israel was going to meet some of the descendants of Ishmael and of Keturah. That is why it was important for them to have knowledge of the fact that these groups of people were also descendants of Abraham. It was also important for Israel to realize and understand the promises that had been made to these descendants. Then, we are told about the time when Ishmael died. We see that Ishmael was one hundred thirty-seven years old, so he did not live as long as Abraham had lived. We see that when Ishmael died, he died in the presence of all of his brethren or relatives. This would point out the fact that they did not scatter to the various areas where they built their towns and settlements until after the death of Ishmael. This summarizes the other descendants of Abraham so that we can know a little about his entire family. It also helps us to understand why it was so important for the statement to be included in 21:12 that says, "in Isaac your seed shall be called." This made it clear that the statement God made to Abraham in Genesis 12:3, "...And in you all of the families of the earth shall be blessed" would be carried on through Isaac since Christ would one day be a descendent of Abraham and Isaac.

We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain the importance of the promises made to various men in the Old Testament about the fact that the One who would bring blessing to all of the families of the earth would be fulfilled in Christ. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to explain these things.

The Birth and Early Life of Jacob and Esau

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn how to explain how the various Arabic nations are related to Abraham. We also want to help them explain why Abraham was promised that the blessing given to him was to be passed on to Isaac. In this topic, we will begin to learn about the development of the family of Isaac.

In Genesis 25:19-23, we read, “This *is* the genealogy of Isaac, Abraham’s son. Abraham begot Isaac. Isaac was forty years old when he took Rebekah as wife, the daughter of Bethuel the Syrian of Padan Aram, the sister of Laban the Syrian. Now Isaac pleaded with the Lord for his wife, because she was barren; and the Lord granted his plea, and Rebekah his wife conceived. But the children struggled together within her; and she said, ‘If *all is* well, why *am I like* this?’ So she went to inquire of the Lord. And the Lord said to her: ‘Two nations *are* in your womb, two peoples shall be separated from your body; *one* people shall be stronger than the other, and the older shall serve the younger.’” We saw that the families of Keturah and Ishmael were summarized in our last topic. Here, we are introduced to the family of Isaac and Rebekah.

Isaac and Rebekah had been married almost 20 years and had not been given any children by the Lord. As a result, we see that Isaac began to plead with the Lord to make it possible for Rebekah to have a child. We see that the Lord granted his plea and Rebekah became pregnant. This is a clear reminder that the Lord is the One who makes it possible for a couple to have children. Psalm 127:3 says, “Behold, children *are* a heritage from the Lord, the fruit of the womb *is* a reward.” Many couples have a great desire for children but have not been able to have any. Here, we see that Isaac gives us an example of one thing that a couple can do. If God has a particular reason for not giving them children, He will assure them of His grace. 2 Corinthians 12:9-10 says, “And He said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.’ Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ’s sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.”

Here, we see that Rebekah conceived in answer to the prayer of Isaac. However, then Rebekah had a new problem. She felt like there was a conflict going on inside of her. Just as Isaac had done when she could not conceive, she prayed to the Lord to ask the Lord what was happening that caused her to feel like a big conflict was going on inside her body. The Lord also answered her prayer as the Lord let her know that she was going to have twins. However, the twins were very different from each other and they were already in conflict. The twins would become two separate nations. They would have two very different groups of descendants. One group of descendants would be much stronger than the other. A final thing about these two different sons was the fact that the older son and his descendants would serve the younger son and his descendants. Rebekah was able to understand what was happening within her once the Lord had explained this to her.

Genesis 25:24-28 says, “So when her days were fulfilled *for her* to give birth, indeed *there were* twins in her womb. And the first came out red. *He was* like a hairy garment all over; so they called his name Esau. Afterward his brother came out, and his hand took hold of Esau’s heel; so his name was called Jacob. Isaac *was* sixty years old when she bore them. So the boys grew. And Esau was a skillful hunter, a man of the field; but Jacob was a mild man, dwelling in tents. And Isaac loved Esau because he ate *of his* game, but Rebekah loved Jacob.” We see that there were noticeable differences between the two sons from the day that they were born.

As God had told Rebekah, she did have twins when the day of birth came. We see that the first son looked very different from the second son when they were born.

The skin of the first son was very red when he was born. In addition, when he was born, he had hair all over him. There was so much hair on this older son that it almost looked like he was wearing clothing made of hair. That was how he got his name, because the name “Esau” means *hairy*. In verse 30, we see that Esau was later given a second name. Genesis 25:30 says, “And Esau said to Jacob, ‘Please feed me with that same red *stew*, for I *am* weary.’ Therefore his name was called Edom.” In this verse, we see that Esau was also given the name Edom. “Edom” means *red*. As a result, the two things that were true at his birth became a part of both of the names that he was given, even though he received the second name quite a number of years later. His younger brother was born very soon after Esau. In fact, the younger son was holding onto the heel of Esau when Esau was born. That became the reason that the younger son was given the name Jacob. The name “Jacob” means *heel holder or supplanter*. Many cultures name children based on things the parents first see when a child is born. That was certainly true in the case of Esau and Jacob. We also see that Isaac was sixty years old when the twins were born.

Other differences became noticeable as the two boys grew and became young men. Esau loved to be out in the fields and wooded areas and he became a skillful hunter. In contrast, Jacob became a very quiet and ordinary young man who preferred to spend most of his time in the tents. This created a new problem as the boy grew into young men. Isaac loved to eat the meat that Esau got through his hunting. As a result, Esau became his favorite son. Meanwhile, Jacob was quick to help care for the tents and do other things around the tents. As a result, he became the favorite son of Rebekah. This always creates problems when a parent has a favorite child and favors that child over the other brothers and sisters. We will certainly see how this favoritism by the parents created conflicts between the two sons.

We see some additional differences in the two sons in Genesis 25:29-34 where we read, “Now Jacob cooked a stew; and Esau came in from the field, and he *was* weary. And Esau said to Jacob, ‘Please feed me with that same red *stew*, for I *am* weary.’ Therefore his name was called Edom. But Jacob said, ‘Sell me your birthright as of this day.’ And Esau said, ‘Look, I *am* about to die; so what *is* this birthright to me?’ Then Jacob said, ‘Swear to me as of this day.’ So he swore to him, and sold his birthright to Jacob. And Jacob gave Esau bread and stew of lentils; then he ate and drank, arose, and went his way. Thus Esau despised *his* birthright.” Here, we see Esau sold his birthright for a bowl of stew. We will see that really shows the lack of spiritual life in Esau.

As a part of liking to work in the tents, we see that Jacob liked to cook. One day, Esau came in from the field and he was tired and hungry. Jacob had just finished preparing a nice red stew. Esau saw the stew and immediately asked Jacob for some of the stew. There had apparently been an ongoing discussion between Jacob and Esau about the meaning and importance of the birthright, which belonged to the oldest child. Jacob had been able to tell by the attitude of Esau that the birthright did not mean much to him. As a result, Jacob decided to make a deal with Esau. Jacob asked Esau to sell the birthright to him for a bowl of stew. Esau showed his complete lack of interest in the birthright by his statement as he said that the birthright would be worth nothing if he died of hunger.

After a day out in the field, an extra hour or even two does not mean life and death. Instead, it means that you are just in a hurry and do not want to wait an hour. That is why it shows that Esau really had no interest in the birthright. Jacob just said, “Swear to me as of this day.” Esau quickly made the promise that the birthright was sold as of that time to Jacob. Then, Jacob gave Esau bread and the lentil stew to eat. Esau ate the food and then got up and went his way.

By this action, we see that Esau despised his birthright. The word translated “despised” means *to show contempt or to treat as worthless*. Hebrews 12:15-16 says, “looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled; lest there *be* any fornicator or profane person like Esau, who for one morsel of food sold his birthright.” The word translated “profane” means *ungodly*.

What was the importance of the birthright? The most important part of the birthright was the responsibility to be the spiritual leader of the family. Exodus 4:22-23 says, “Then you shall say to Pharaoh, ‘Thus says the Lord: ‘Israel *is* My son, My firstborn. So I say to you, let My son go that he may serve Me. But if you refuse to let him go, indeed I will kill your son, your firstborn.’””” In the Old Testament, Israel was chosen to be a priesthood to speak to God for the world. Psalm 67:5-7 says, “Let the peoples praise You, O God; Let all the peoples praise You. *Then* the earth shall yield her increase; God, our own God, shall bless us. God shall bless us, and all the ends of the earth shall fear Him.” In the same way, each individual father was to be a spiritual priest for his family and speak to God for his family. Here, we see that Esau was an ungodly man who had no desire to be a priest on behalf of his family. He was very willing get rid of that responsibility and also get a bowl of stew for getting rid of it. He was actually showing the condition of his heart by his actions. That was why he could not inherit the blessing.

We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain why the Lord told Rebekah that her older son would serve the younger son. The Lord knew that Esau would reject the spiritual leadership of his family, so his family certainly could not later lead the spiritual leadership of the nation. May the Lord richly bless you as you equip your children to explain these things to others.

The Lord Told Isaac Not to Go to Egypt

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain why Esau chose to reject the spiritual leadership of his family and gladly sold that spiritual leadership for a bowl of stew. In this topic, we will see why the Lord told Isaac not to go down into Egypt.

In Genesis 26:1-5, we read, “There was a famine in the land, besides the first famine that was in the days of Abraham. And Isaac went to Abimelech king of the Philistines, in Gerar. Then, the Lord appeared to him and said: ‘Do not go down to Egypt; live in the land of which I shall tell you. Dwell in this land, and I will be with you and bless you; for to you and your descendants I give all these lands, and I will perform the oath which I swore to Abraham your father. And I will make your descendants multiply as the stars of heaven; I will give to your descendants all these lands; and in your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed; because Abraham obeyed My voice and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws.’” In these verses, we see that Isaac was told by the Lord not to go down to Egypt because of the famine. As a result, Isaac chose to move to the land of the Philistines instead.

When the Lord told Isaac not to go to Egypt, we see that the Lord gave Isaac some promises if he would be obedient. First, the Lord said that He would be with Isaac. The Lord gives every Christian a similar promise today as Hebrews 13:5 says, “*Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, ‘I will never leave you nor forsake you.’*” We can also count on the fact that the Lord will not leave us. Second, God promised, “I will...bless you.” The Lord had earlier told Abraham in Genesis 12:2-3, “I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.” Here, we see that the Lord gave Isaac a promise similar to the promise that He had given to Abraham.

Third, the Lord promised Isaac the land in which he was living as the Lord said, “...for to you and your descendants I give all these lands, and I will perform the oath which I swore to Abraham your father.” God will always keep His Word. The Lord had told Abraham in Genesis 12:7, “Then the Lord appeared to Abram and said, ‘To your descendants I will give this land.’ And there he built an altar to the Lord, who had appeared to him.” The Lord now repeated this same promise twice to Isaac. Fourth, the Lord promised that He would multiply the descendants of Isaac as the stars of heaven. God had told Abraham in Genesis 22:17, “...blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which *is* on the seashore; and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies.”

Fifth, and most important of all of the promises, the Lord told Isaac that through his seed all of the nations would be blessed. Galatians 3:16 says, “Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, ‘And to seeds,’ as of many, but as of one, ‘And to your Seed,’ who is Christ.” This is a clear statement to Isaac that the promise made to Abraham about Christ coming from his family would be passed on through the line of Isaac. This was part of the blessing that would come on Isaac because of the obedience of Abraham. The fact that Isaac was obedient to God and did not go down to Egypt did not mean that he was perfect in his obedience to God.

We go on read that Isaac lied about the fact that Rebekah was his wife. Genesis 26:6-9 says,

“So Isaac dwelt in Gerar. And the men of the place asked about his wife. And he said, ‘She is my sister’; for he was afraid to say, ‘*She is my wife,*’ because he thought, ‘lest the men of the place kill me for Rebekah, because she *is* beautiful to behold.’ Now it came to pass, when he had been there a long time, that Abimelech king of the Philistines looked through a window, and saw, and there was Isaac, showing endearment to Rebekah his wife. Then Abimelech called Isaac and said, ‘Quite obviously she *is* your wife; so how could you say, “She *is* my sister”?’ Isaac said to him, ‘Because I said, “Lest I die on account of her.”’” Here, we see that Isaac became guilty of the same sin that Abraham committed and lied about his wife. Abraham committed this lie first in Egypt and then again among the Philistines. Isaac committed this sin among the same Philistines.

We see that the men in Gerar asked Isaac if Rebekah was his wife. Isaac was controlled by fear and answered that question in his own strength. Because of that fear, he said, “She is my sister,” instead of saying, “She is my wife.” Here, we see that Isaac did that same thing that Abraham had earlier done in Gerar and for the same reason. Isaac was more concerned about his own life than he was about what happened to his wife. He was afraid that the men of the place would kill him in order to get Rebekah as their wife because she was very beautiful. Notice that Abraham said exactly the same thing. Genesis 20:10-11 says, “Then Abimelech said to Abraham, ‘What did you have in view, that you have done this thing?’ And Abraham said, ‘Because I thought, surely the fear of God *is* not in this place; and they will kill me on account of my wife.’” Abimelech was a title similar to pharaoh or king so it is probably not the same Abimelech. Isaac was not yet born when Abraham told this same lie and now the sons of Isaac, Esau and Jacob, were already grown. This would mean this happened nearly one hundred years later.

This generation of the people of Gerar did not make the same choice that Abimelech had made during the time of Abraham. We read that Isaac and Rebekah lived in Gerar for a long time and none of the men tried to take her to become their wife. One day, Abimelech looked out through his window and saw that Isaac was showing endearment to his wife. This meant that Isaac was giving caresses to Rebekah that indicated that this was his wife and not his sister. That led Abimelech to rebuke Isaac just as an earlier Abimelech had rebuked Abraham. Abimelech said that it was obvious that Rebekah was his wife, not his sister. Then, he began his rebuke in the form of a question, “How could you say, ‘She is my sister’?” The lie of Isaac had been exposed and Isaac had to admit that the reason he had lied was due to the fact that he feared for his own life.

We go on to see that Isaac was then given a strong rebuke for his lie. Genesis 26:10-14 says, “And Abimelech said, ‘What *is* this you have done to us? One of the people might soon have lain with your wife, and you would have brought guilt on us.’ So Abimelech charged all *his* people, saying, ‘He who touches this man or his wife shall surely be put to death.’ Then Isaac sowed in that land, and reaped in the same year a hundredfold; and the Lord blessed him. The man began to prosper, and continued prospering until he became very prosperous; for he had possessions of flocks and possessions of herds and a great number of servants. So the Philistines envied him.” Abimelech quickly reminded Isaac of what could have happened to his wife because of his lie. Many times, people do not think about the consequences of their lies. That was probably true of Isaac.

Abimelech pointed out the possible consequences of the lie of Isaac and told how that lie could have affected his whole nation. That is what had happened when Abraham had told the same lie. Genesis 20:9 says, “And Abimelech called Abraham and said to him, ‘What have you done to us? How have I offended you, that you have brought on me and on my kingdom a great sin? You have done deeds to me that ought not to be done.’” The lie of Abraham had affected the whole nation of Gerar. We see the consequences of that lie when Abraham repented and prayed

for the kingdom of Gerar. Genesis 20:17-18 says, “So Abraham prayed to God; and God healed Abimelech, his wife, and his female servants. Then they bore *children*; for the Lord had closed up all the wombs of the house of Abimelech because of Sarah, Abraham’s wife.” The Lord had made it impossible for the all of the women of Gerar to get pregnant as a consequence of the original lie of Abraham. Now, Isaac had told the same lie and the king realized that his lie could have affected the entire nation again. To prevent consequences because of the lie, Abimelech warned his nation that anyone who touched Isaac or Rebekah would be put to death.

Once Isaac repented of his sin, the Lord could bless him again. The same is true for us today. 1 John 1:9 tells us, “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” We see that Isaac planted crops of grain that year and God caused his crops to produce a hundred times as much as he had planted. That was a very good harvest and happened because Isaac had confessed his sin and the Lord chose to bless Isaac as a result. In fact, we see that from that time on, Isaac began to prosper. Through the years, the Lord caused Isaac to continue to prosper until he became very wealthy. We see that he had large flocks of sheep and goats and he had large herds of cattle. He also had a great number of servants to care for his flocks and herds as well as the crops that he planted.

However, we see that the Philistines envied him. The word translated “envied” means *to become jealous of or to provoke to jealous anger*. In the next topic, we will see what the Philistines did because of this envy. The Bible gives us many warnings about the danger of envy. Proverbs 24:19-20 says, “Do not fret because of evildoers, nor be envious of the wicked; for there will be no prospect for the evil *man*; the lamp of the wicked will be put out.” In contrast, Proverbs 23:17-18 says, “Do not let your heart envy sinners, but *be zealous* for the fear of the Lord all the day; for surely there is a hereafter, and your hope will not be cut off.” Here, we see the importance of choosing the fear of the Lord instead of choosing to envy others. We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain to others why they have chosen to follow the Lord instead of envying the things that others have on this earth. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children by your example and teach them how to warn others of the dangers of envy.

The Lord Appeared to Isaac

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to seek the blessing of the Lord and not to envy others who gain worldly riches. In this topic, we will see what the Philistines did because they envied Isaac. We will also see that Isaac responded by trusting the Lord instead of trying to get even with the Philistines.

Genesis 26:15-18 says, “Now the Philistines had stopped up all the wells which his father’s servants had dug in the days of Abraham his father, and they had filled them with earth. And Abimelech said to Isaac, ‘Go away from us, for you are much mightier than we.’ Then Isaac departed from there and pitched his tent in the Valley of Gerar, and dwelt there. And Isaac dug again the wells of water which they had dug in the days of Abraham his father, for the Philistines had stopped them up after the death of Abraham. He called them by the names which his father had called them.” In these verses, we see that Isaac was asked by the Philistines to leave their area. We also see what the Philistines had done after Abraham had died.

In an area with a limited amount of water available, wells become a very important source of water. During the lifetime of Abraham, his servants had dug several wells in the area of the Philistines to provide water for his flocks and herds. The Philistines waited until after Abraham had died and then they filled up these wells with dirt so that no water could be drawn from those wells. That was a way to try and get Isaac to move away from their area because water was essential for the survival of his flocks and herds. Many times, such an action would start a war between two groups of people. Here, we see that Isaac chose to act differently than those who would start a conflict. He chose to move to the Valley of Gerar. There, Isaac had his servants dig out the wells dug by his father that the Philistines had filled with dirt.

We see that Isaac called those wells by the same names that his father had called the wells. Abraham had earlier experienced conflict about the wells that his servants had dug. Genesis 21:30-31 says, “And he said, ‘You will take *these* seven ewe lambs from my hand, that they may be my witness that I have dug this well.’ Therefore he called that place Beersheba, because the two of them swore an oath there.” The name “Beersheba” means the *well of the sevenfold oath*. Then, Genesis 21:33 says, “Then *Abraham* planted a tamarisk tree in Beersheba, and there called on the name of the LORD, the Everlasting God.” Isaac wanted those wells to have the same names his father had given them because the names of the wells showed the eternal values that had guided Abraham during his life. Isaac wanted those same values to guide his life and so he gave the wells the same names.

In addition, we read that the servants of Isaac also dug new wells. Genesis 26:19-22 says, “Also Isaac’s servants dug in the valley, and found a well of running water there. But the herdsmen of Gerar quarreled with Isaac’s herdsmen, saying, ‘The water *is* ours.’ So he called the name of the well Esek, because they quarreled with him. Then they dug another well, and they quarreled over that *one* also. So he called its name Sitnah. And he moved from there and dug another well, and they did not quarrel over it. So he called its name Rehoboth, because he said, ‘For now the Lord has made room for us, and we shall be fruitful in the land.’” In these verses, we see that the servants of Isaac dug a total of three new wells. We go on to read what they did at the first new well.

However, the men from Gerar that were tending their flocks in that valley had some of the same envy that Isaac had faced earlier. They immediately claimed that the water from the first new

well belonged to them and began to quarrel with the servants of Isaac. As a result, Isaac called the name of that well, “Esek”, which means *contention*. Isaac gave the well this name because of the fact that the men of Gerar quarreled with him and claimed that the water belonged to them. The word translated “contention” can mean to *fight with words or to fight physically*. To fight with words is illustrated in Genesis 31:36 where we read, “Then Jacob was angry and rebuked Laban, and Jacob answered and said to Laban: ‘What *is* my trespass? What *is* my sin, that you have so hotly pursued me?’” In this verse, the word is translated “rebuked”. To fight physically is illustrated in Exodus 21:18 where we read, “‘“If men contend with each other, and one strikes the other with a stone or with *his* fist, and he does not die but is confined to *his* bed.’”” In this verse, the word is translated “contend” and means to *have a physical fight*. Isaac heard that his servants were having verbal conflicts but he did not want them to become physical.

Instead of fighting, Isaac decided to have his servants dig another well. However, the same thing happened a second time. The men of Gerar also claimed the water from this second well and quarreled over the second well also. As a result, Isaac called the second well “Sitnah”. The name of this second well means *strife*. Isaac did not want his servants to have strife with the men of Abimelech. As a result, Isaac moved out of the valley of Gerar so that his servants and flocks were removed from the valley where the men of Gerar claimed the water belonged to them, even though the servants of Isaac had dug the well.

We see that the Lord blessed the results of this move. This time, when the well was completed and there was water in the well, the men of Gerar did not claim that the water was their water. As a result, Isaac named the well “Rehoboth”. The name “Rehoboth” means *plenty of room, wide places or room enough*. By his choices and actions, Isaac clearly illustrated a principle that Christ would teach. Matthew 5:43-45 says, “‘You have heard that it was said, “You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.” But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.’” Isaac could have hated the men of Gerar or even gone to war with them. Instead, Isaac chose to give up his right to the two wells his servants had dug. We will see that the choice of Isaac resulted in long-term blessing for him. Isaac realized that the Lord had made room for him. He also realized that the Lord would cause him to be fruitful in the land.

Genesis 26:23-25 says, “Then he went up from there to Beersheba. And the Lord appeared to him the same night and said, ‘I *am* the God of your father Abraham; do not fear, for I *am* with you. I will bless you and multiply your descendants for My servant Abraham’s sake.’ So he built an altar there and called on the name of the Lord, and he pitched his tent there; and there Isaac’s servants dug a well.” We saw the first blessing God gave to Isaac because he looked to the Lord was that God strengthened his faith. We go on to read about a second blessing and we will see the third blessing in our next topic. These verses tell us that Isaac went from Rehoboth to Beersheba. It was at Beersheba that he experienced the second blessing.

We see that the Lord brought a great blessing to Isaac at Beersheba because the Lord appeared to him the same night. This was actually an Old Testament appearance of Christ to Isaac. Certainly, we could not think of anything that would be a greater personal blessing. Then, we are given the message that Christ spoke to Isaac in Genesis 26:24, “I am the God of your father Abraham; do not fear, for I am with you. I will bless you and multiply your descendants for My servant Abraham’s sake.” Think how you would feel if you woke up in the middle of the night and someone was standing there and spoke this statement that the Lord spoke to Isaac. In just this short message, Christ made some wonderful statements to Isaac. First, Christ said that He was the God of Abraham, the father of Isaac. Isaac had learned many things from Abraham

about the way that the Lord had blessed him. He had even been with Abraham when Christ had spoken to Abraham. However, this time, God was speaking only to him.

Second, Christ told Isaac not to be afraid. This is a message that is given many times to those who serve the Lord. The angel told the shepherds at the time of the birth of Christ in Luke 2:10, "Then the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people.'" The reason that those who follow Christ do not need to be afraid is given in Hebrews 13:5 where we read, "*Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, 'I will never leave you nor forsake you.'*" Then, Hebrews 13:8 says, "Jesus Christ *is* the same yesterday, today, and forever."

Third, Christ told Isaac that He would bless Isaac and multiply His descendants for the sake of Abraham because Abraham was His servant. We see that Isaac then built an altar and called on the name of the Lord. This is the first recorded altar that Isaac built. He may have helped his father build the altar when his father placed him on the altar but this is the first recorded time that he built one on his own, even though this is the second time that the Lord appeared to him. Isaac was growing in his understanding of what it meant to have fellowship with God. That is a key lesson that each of us need to experience in our lives as we grow in the Lord. As a result of the fact that Isaac met the Lord and built an altar to Him, the Lord led him to stay in this place for a period of time as we see that he pitched his tent in that place. This led Isaac to have his servants dig another well there. We will see what happened to that well in our next topic. We want to equip our physical and spiritual children to help others develop fellowship with the Lord and not just knowledge about God. They will only learn how to equip others to develop fellowship with the Lord as they experience that fellowship in their own lives. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children by your example how you develop your own fellowship with the Lord.

Isaac and Abimelech made a Treaty

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to develop fellowship with the Lord and not just have knowledge of God. We saw in an earlier topic that Abimelech had asked Isaac to leave their area. In this topic, we will see that Abimelech now wanted to make a treaty with Isaac.

In Genesis 26:26-29, we read, “Then Abimelech came to him from Gerar with Ahuzzath, one of his friends, and Phichol the commander of his army. And Isaac said to them, ‘Why have you come to me, since you hate me and have sent me away from you?’ But they said, ‘We have certainly seen that the LORD is with you. So we said, “Let there now be an oath between us, between you and us; and let us make a covenant with you, that you will do us no harm, since we have not touched you, and since we have done nothing to you but good and have sent you away in peace. You *are* now the blessed of the LORD.’”” Abimelech and his people had sent away Isaac from their land because they saw that the Lord was blessing him. His servants had also had conflict with the servants of Isaac about two of the wells that Isaac had dug. Here, we see that suddenly Abimelech, his friend, and the commander of his army came to Isaac and wanted to talk to him.

Isaac immediately questioned why they had come to visit him and asked them, “Why have you come to me, since you hate me and have sent me away from you?” This was a good question after the way that Isaac felt about how they had treated him. Now, he wanted to know why they had come. The rest of the statement gives two reasons why he questioned the fact that they had come to visit him. He felt Abimelech and his people had shown by the way that they treated him and his servants that they hated Isaac. Here, we see that our actions speak much louder than our words. Abimelech and the Philistines showed that they were so envious of the blessing of Isaac that it caused them to show hate by their actions, especially as they took the two wells that the servants of Isaac had redug that had been originally dug by Abraham.

Second, they had shown that their envy had turned to hate by the fact that they had sent Isaac away from their region and told him that he could not live in that area. As a result, Isaac had a reason to ask those men why they had come to visit him. Then they replied, “We have certainly seen that the LORD is with you.” Isaac could have fought for the first two wells that he had redug. Instead, Isaac had allowed the servants of Abimelech to take those wells. 1 Peter 3:8-9 says, “Finally, all *of you be* of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, *be* tenderhearted, *be* courteous; not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing.” Isaac did not know these verses because they were not yet written but he was being led by the Lord and practiced them. God blessed Isaac as a result. Abimelech and his people could see that the Lord was blessing him and that is why they now wanted to make an oath and a covenant with Isaac.

Then, Abimelech explained what they wanted to include in the covenant. They wanted a covenant that Isaac would do them no harm. This statement shows that they were actually controlled by fear. They also recognized, by the fact that Isaac said they hated him, that Isaac felt he had been sent away with a lack of respect. They feared that such an attitude could eventually cause Isaac to attack them if he became more powerful. As a result, they tried to explain to Isaac that they did not hate him. They reminded Isaac that they had not touched him. Isaac had said that Rebekah was his sister because he had feared that one of the men of that place would kill him so that he could take Rebekah as his wife. Abimelech had warned his

people not to touch or hurt either Isaac or Rebekah. Abimelech was reminding Isaac that he had no hate for Isaac.

Abimelech then went on to tell Isaac, “we have done nothing to you but good and have sent you away in peace.” Here, we see that Abimelech felt he and his people had treated Isaac with kindness. Apparently, he did not know, or at least did not mention, that the wells his servants were claiming water from were wells that the servants of Isaac had dug. Genesis 26:20-21 says, “But the herdsmen of Gerar quarreled with Isaac’s herdsmen, saying, ‘The water *is* ours.’ So he called the name of the well Esek, because they quarreled with him. Then they dug another well, and they quarreled over that *one* also. So he called its name Sitnah.” It was due to what had happened at these wells that Isaac thought that he was hated by Abimelech and the people of Gerar. Our feelings can often deceive us.

Abimelech had told Isaac in Genesis 26:16, “And Abimelech said to Isaac, ‘Go away from us, for you are much mightier than we.’” Abimelech thought that what he said at that time was a message of peace. He felt that he had asked Isaac to leave in peace. In fact, Abimelech had recognized that Isaac was blessed by the Lord and not that he was sending him away because he hated Isaac. Here, we see an example of the fact that people can have very different meanings by the words they use when they talk with each other. Now, Isaac was able to understand that Abimelech wanted to have peace with him and not conflict. Romans 12:18 says, “If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men.” This was what both men wanted and now they understood that was the desire of the other person also.

Genesis 26:30-33 goes on to say, “So he made them a feast, and they ate and drank. Then they arose early in the morning and swore an oath with one another; and Isaac sent them away, and they departed from him in peace. It came to pass the same day that Isaac’s servants came and told him about the well which they had dug, and said to him, ‘We have found water.’ So he called it Shebah. Therefore the name of the city *is* Beersheba to this day.” Isaac then prepared a feast to celebrate the oath and make the covenant of peace with Abimelech. Early the next morning, Abimelech and the two men with him left to return to their own homes. Now, instead of having future conflict about water, Isaac and Abimelech separated from one another with a covenant of peace.

Later that day, the servants of Isaac came to tell them about the well that they had dug. They shared the good news that they had found water, so Isaac called the name of the well “Shebah” which means *an oath*. This was the same place where Abraham and an earlier Abimelech had made a covenant nearly one hundred years earlier. Genesis 21:30-32 tells us what Abraham said when those verses say, “And he said, ‘You will take *these* seven ewe lambs from my hand, that they may be my witness that I have dug this well.’ Therefore he called that place Beersheba, because the two of them swore an oath there. Thus they made a covenant at Beersheba. So Abimelech rose with Phichol, the commander of his army, and they returned to the land of the Philistines.” By these verses, we see that Isaac and Abimelech were actually making a renewal of the covenant that had been made by their fathers nearly one hundred years earlier. The reason for that earlier covenant was to recognize that the well and the water in it belonged to Abraham. As a result, this covenant actually renewed the covenant made by their fathers regarding the water in the area of Beersheba. When Moses wrote the book of Genesis several hundred years later, the name of that city was still Beersheba.

We go on to read in Genesis 26:34-35, “When Esau was forty years old, he took as wives Judith the daughter of Beerli the Hittite, and Basemath the daughter of Elon the Hittite. And they were a grief of mind to Isaac and Rebekah.” In these verses, we see that Esau decided it was time to develop his own family. Esau did not ask his parents for counsel when he decided to marry. In contrast, Abraham had told his servant in Genesis 24:3, “and I will make you swear by the

LORD, the God of heaven and the God of the earth, that you will not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell.” Esau decided to marry two women and they were both from the Hittites and descendants of Canaan. The name “Hittite” means *descendent of Heth*. Genesis 10:15-18 says, “Canaan begot Sidon his firstborn, and Heth; the Jebusite, the Amorite, and the Girgashite; the Hivite, the Arkite, and the Sinite; the Arvadite, the Zemarite, and the Hamathite. Afterward the families of the Canaanites were dispersed.” In Genesis 9:25, we read, “Then he said: ‘Cursed *be* Canaan; a servant of servants he shall be to his brethren.’” As a result, we see that the wives of Esau were descendants of Canaan who had been cursed by Noah.

We also read that these wives of Esau were a grief of mind to Isaac and Rebekah. The word translated “grief” is used in the sense of *disappointment*. The word translated “mind” is most commonly translated *spirit, wind or breath*. This choice by Esau to choose a wife from the Canaanites brought great grief to the spirits of Isaac and Rebekah. As a result, Genesis 27:46 says, “And Rebekah said to Isaac, ‘I am weary of my life because of the daughters of Heth; if Jacob takes a wife of the daughters of Heth, like these *who are* the daughters of the land, what good will my life be to me?’” The next verses, in Genesis 28:1-2, go on to say, “Then Isaac called Jacob and blessed him, and charged him, and said to him: ‘You shall not take a wife from the daughters of Canaan. Arise, go to Padan Aram, to the house of Bethuel your mother’s father; and take yourself a wife from there of the daughters of Laban your mother’s brother.’” Here, we see that they encouraged Jacob to get a wife the same way Isaac had received his wife.

Long before children even begin to think of marriage, we want to help our physical children begin to understand the importance of choosing a godly partner for a husband or wife. The same is true with spiritual sons and daughters because the choices that they make will greatly affect the rest of their lives and the lives of all future generations in their families. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your physical and spiritual children realize the importance of choosing a godly husband or wife to marry.