

Genesis, Session 15: The Promised Son and the Test of Faith (Genesis 20:1-25:18)

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Abstract

This lecture analyzes Genesis 20:1 through 25:18, concluding the patriarchal narrative of Abraham's cycle of faith. It examines the recurrence of Abraham's wife-sister deception with King Abimelech, the miraculous birth of the promised heir Isaac, and the painful expulsion of Hagar and Ishmael. Finally, it focuses on the Akedah (the binding of Isaac) as the ultimate test designed to actualize Abraham's faith and demonstrate God's eternal covenant fidelity.

Outline

I. Genesis 20: Abraham and Abimelech at Gerar

A. Abraham's Repeat of the Wife-Sister Deception

1. Abraham fears for his life due to perceived lack of fear of God in Gerar
2. He claims Sarah is his sister (partially true: same father, different mother)

B. God's Intervention and Revelation to Abimelech

1. God warns Abimelech in a dream of impending death due to taking a married woman
2. Abimelech defends his innocence and integrity
3. God designates Abraham as a prophet who will intercede for Abimelech

C. Resolution and Healing

1. Abraham prays, and God heals Abimelech's household (restoring fertility)
2. The irony of fertility in Abimelech's house while Sarah remains barren

II. Genesis 21: The Birth of Isaac and Expulsion of Ishmael

A. Miraculous Birth of Isaac, the Promised Son

1. Abraham is 100 years old, Sarah is 90
2. Sarah's laughter of joy replaces her earlier skeptical laughter

B. Rivalry and Expulsion of Hagar and Ishmael

1. Ishmael (older teenager) is seen "mocking" or ridiculing the young Isaac
2. Sarah demands their expulsion, which Abraham reluctantly agrees to after God's reassurance

3. God promises to make Ishmael a great nation because he is Abraham's offspring
4. Note on endogamy vs. exogamy: Hagar takes an Egyptian wife for Ishmael

C. Treaty of Beersheba

1. Abimelech and his commander Phicol recognize God's blessing on Abraham
2. A covenant/peace treaty is established
3. Beersheba named: "Well of Seven" or "Well of Oath"
4. Abraham worships and calls on Yahweh, "El Olam" (the Eternal God)

III. Genesis 22: The Test of Abraham's Faith (The Akedah)

A. The Command to Sacrifice Isaac

1. God commands Abraham to offer his only/unique son, Isaac, at Moriah
2. Verbal parallels to Genesis 12 ("go to the place I will show you")

B. Abraham's Journey of Faith

1. A three-day journey of silence, anguish, and reflection
2. Abraham tells his servants "we will worship and we will come back to you"
3. Abraham's reasoning: trusted God's power and ability to raise the dead if necessary

C. The Binding (Akedah) and Divine Intervention

1. Isaac's trust: allows himself to be bound and placed on the altar
2. The angel of the Lord stops Abraham as the knife is drawn
3. God provides a ram in the thicket as the substitute sacrifice

D. Confirmation of the Covenant Promises

1. God swears an oath by Himself, guaranteeing descendants and blessings

IV. Genesis 23: The Death of Sarah and Purchase of Burial Site

A. Sarah dies at age 127 in Hebron

B. Negotiation with Ephron the Hittite for the Cave of Machpelah

1. Abraham identifies himself as a sojourner and alien
2. Purchase of the cave and field as a permanent family burial site (first land ownership)

V. Genesis 24: A Wife for Isaac

A. Abraham's concern for endogamy (marrying within the family clan of Terah)

B. The journey of Abraham's servant to northern Mesopotamia (Aram Naharaim)

C. Sign at the well and introduction of Rebekah

1. Servant prays for a sign of hospitality and generosity
2. Rebekah draws water for the servant and his camels
3. Rebekah's lineage verified: daughter of Bethuel, sister of Laban

D. Negotiation and Rebekah's departure

1. Servant retells how God guided him
2. Rebekah willingly agrees to leave immediately with the servant

E. Isaac and Rebekah's union

1. Isaac brings Rebekah into Sarah's tent; she becomes the "new Sarah"

VI. Genesis 25:1-18: The Death of Abraham and Ishmael's Descendants

A. Abraham's marriage to Keturah and other offspring

B. Abraham leaves everything to Isaac

C. Death of Abraham at age 175

1. Isaac and Ishmael reunite to bury Abraham in the cave of Machpelah

D. Record of Ishmael's descendants (12 tribal rulers)

VII. Theological Conclusions

A. God's faithfulness to His covenant promises

B. The purpose of testing: to expose and actualize human faith

C. The role of intercessory prayer and walking with God