



## Becoming Strong in Faith (Genesis 21:1-34)

*"Men are not to be judged by the presence or absence of faults, but by the direction of their lives."*<sup>1</sup>

### 1. A Supernatural Revitalization (21:1-8)

- **V.2 "in his old age"** – Abraham is 100, but even after Sarah's death in **Genesis 25:2** he is able to have six more children with Keturah, his second wife. Sarah is 90, but God has rejuvenated her body to where she can become pregnant, give birth to Isaac and nurse him (**v.7-8**).
- Dr. Bill says, **"God is always on schedule, though not on OUR schedule.** Sometimes people ask, 'Why hasn't Jesus come back yet?' My response is, 'He *is* on schedule.'"
- "Sarah nursed him, in accordance with the custom of the times, until probably two or three years of age. The day of his weaning was marked by a great feast, also in accord with custom."<sup>2</sup>

### 2. The Sibling Rivalry (21:8-9)

- **Galatians 4:22-29**, Paul uses this story as an analogy of our salvation in Christ. See chart:

Hagar (Lost)	Sarah (Saved)
Flesh	Spirit
Bondwoman	Free
Old Covenant	New Covenant
Earthly Jerusalem	Heavenly Jerusalem
Works and Law (Mt. Sinai)	Faith and Grace (Calvary)
Children of the world	Children of God

- **Galatians 4:29** describes Ishmael's actions as **"persecuting"** (not simply teasing). Paul says, **"even so it is now."** The people of the Spirit (God's people) continue to be persecuted by the people of the flesh.

<sup>1</sup> James Strahan as quoted by Warren Wiersbe, *Be Obedient* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1991), 92.

<sup>2</sup> Henry M. Morris, *The Genesis Record: A Scientific and Devotional Commentary on the Book of Beginnings* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1976), 367.

- “God had also promised his mother and father that *he* would be blessed (**Genesis 16:12; 17:20**). Even though it was not right, it at least is understandable that he would make fun of his little half-brother, especially on the day of the great feast, where so much attention was being showered on him.”<sup>3</sup>

### 3. The Sad **Rejection** (21:10-16)

- “Sometimes it is necessary for God’s people, if they are truly going to be in the will of God and to enjoy the fulness of His blessing, to separate completely from those who might be a source of friction and carnality, even though such separation will be difficult and will give others (who don’t understand the spiritual issues involved) occasion to criticize and ridicule.”<sup>4</sup>
- Symbolically, you must decide if you will cling to Hagar and Ishmael or go the way of Sarah and Isaac. You cannot do both.

### 4. The Sovereign **Reassurance** (21:17-21)

- “In a striking reversal from the first scene, Hagar is addressed by name by the “**angel of God**” (v. 17), who comforts and assures her that Ishmael will have a promising future (v. 18).”<sup>5</sup>

### 5. A Social **Request** (21:22-32)

- Abimelech is more likely a title, like “Pharoah” or “King” rather than a person’s name.

### 6. The Special **Revelation** (21:33-34)

- *Jehovah El Olam* (meaning “The Lord, the Eternal God”)
- “This is not the first time Abraham had been told a name of God. When Abraham had met Melchizedek after the battle with the four eastern kings, he was introduced to *El Elyon*, ‘**God Most High, Creator [Possessor] of heaven and earth**’ (Gen. 14:19). When he was fearing for his life from possible retaliation from these kings, Abraham was told that God was his ‘**shield**’ and ‘**very great reward**’ (Gen. 15:1). Abraham had been introduced to *El Shaddai*, ‘**God Almighty**’ (Gen. 17:1). Now, after many years of walking with God and of finding God to be sufficient for his every need, he calls upon God as *El Olam*, **the eternal God of all successive ages**.”<sup>6</sup>
- “**Times change, people change, needs change. *El Olam* never changes.** This is the meaning of the word in **Psalm 100:5**: “**For the Lord is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations**” (italics mine). The word has the same significance in **Isaiah 40:28**: “**Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary, and his understanding no one can fathom**” (italics mine).”<sup>7</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Morris, 368.

<sup>4</sup> Morris, 369.

<sup>5</sup> K. A. Mathews, *Genesis 11:27–50:26*, vol. 1B, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2005), 261.

<sup>6</sup> James Montgomery Boice, *Genesis: An Expository Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998), 677.

<sup>7</sup> Boice, 676–677.