

Sarah – A Character Study

Genesis 17:15-17. God is chatting with Abraham, telling him about His plans for the couple. God reaffirms His promise to Abraham of a son. Abraham assumes God is talking about Ishmael. He's not, He's talking about Isaac. But this tells me that Abraham had hitherto looked upon Ishmael as his natural heir, rather than as a regretful mistake, best forgotten about.

Genesis 21.

V1-2. Sarah has the promised baby.

V6. The baby is weaned and Abraham throws a party. Ishmael is spotted laughing at baby Isaac by Sarah who throws her toys out of the pram, demanding mother and son be booted out of the camp.

V11. Abraham is not happy about this. He clearly has deep feelings for his son and he doesn't want him to be thrown out into the desert where he'd almost certainly die.

V12. It takes God's intervention to convince Abraham to let them go. From what God says, it looks like Abraham has some feelings for Hagar to.

Abraham was clearly a paternal guy, he had strong feelings for his son, even though he wasn't the son of promise. So can you imagine how Abraham must have felt when Isaac, a similar age to Ishmael, was instructed to be killed by Abraham and his body sacrificed?

Let's read Genesis 21:14-16. How moving is that? What must that woman have felt. Did she have good reason to be bitter towards Abraham, and was she?

V17-18. Ishmael must have been crying too, and God heard Him and sent His angel. Notice the angel this time is with a small a (NKJV) and is a messenger rather than the problem solver in Genesis 16:10.

V19-21. God doesn't open a spring, rather He digs a well for Hagar, and then off they trot. God continues to look after the lad until he grows up and is married.

Sarah dies in chapter 23. Chapter 25:9 Abraham dies and guess who comes to the funeral? So Ishmael must have kept in touch with Abraham and Isaac somehow.

A quick character study of Sarah -

* She was 65 when Abram started their trek. Genesis 12:4.

* Soon afterwards, to avoid a famine, they move to Egypt. Even at 65, she is stand out beautiful and Abram fears she's going to be made a widow. God intervenes. End result, Abram acquired sheep, cattle, donkeys, camels and servants, one of whom was probably Hagar. Genesis 12:14-20

* 11 years later Sarai orders her handmaid / slave to get impregnated by Abram. Genesis 17:15-19.

* 90 years old, Sarai becomes Sarah. Abraham is promised she'll give him a son, Abraham laughs.

* Sarah overhears the Lord telling Abraham they are going to be parents, and she laughs. When challenged she denies it. Genesis 18:9-15.

* Abraham tells Abimelech that Sarah's his sister, giving tacit approval for an adulterous liaison. Sarah seemed to obediently go along with this. Genesis 20:1-4. The end result, Abraham acquires more sheep and slaves.

- * Isaac is born. Sarah was in her nineties. Hagar is 'let go'. Genesis 21:10
- * Isaac is sacrificed. Sarah's reaction is not recorded, nor is Isaac's immediate reaction, he probably didn't sleep well for a few nights after. Genesis 22:12
- * Sarah dies at 137. Genesis 23:1-2.

There isn't a mass of detail in Genesis about Sarah. She was physically very beautiful, even in her old age, (Joanna Lumley / Felicity Kendal - without botox) an extremely loyal wife, she'd literally do anything for her husband - anything. By contemporary standards, Sarah was not a model wife or a lovely, warm hearted woman, except to her husband and her son. Her behaviour towards Hagar was contemptible, quite happy for her and Ishmael to die.

But by Biblical standards, was she a model wife or did she take loyalty to her husband, beyond the pale? Is there a dilemma when a spouse asks their other half, to do something sinful?

Let's look at Ephesians 5:22-33, Paul's marriage guidance; a model marriage which is a dress rehearsal for Christ's wedding to His church.

Where does Sarah compare favourably and where did she fall short in relation to that passage?

So maybe Sarah wasn't such a lovely warm hearted woman of faith. If she was, it doesn't shine out, and yet she makes it into the Hebrews 11 Hall of Faith. Hebrews 11:11-12, 8th place.

Lessons -

- * If God makes a promise, wait upon the Lord. Isaiah 40:31. Doesn't mean you have to sit back and do nothing towards the fulfilment of the promise, but neither should you wrench control and do it your way.
- * If you hurt someone, don't rely upon God to clean up the hurt you've caused. Matthew 5:23-24.
- * Accept, believe and adopt God's promises, in faith. It's not theoretical, it's as good as fact, eg: John 11:23-26.
- * Don't lie to God.
- * Was Sarah's loyalty too much? Imagine a husband telling his wife; 'There's a guy down the road, says he's going to punch my lights out if you don't sleep with him!' Was she more loyal to her husband than God? Was there a lack of faith by both Abraham and Sarah? Not once, but twice.