

CHAPTER ANALYSIS FORM

Chapter: 20-21

Chapter Title: Abimelech, Isaac

1. Chapter Summary:

1. Chapter 20

- a. Abraham moves 1
- b. Old habits resurface 2
- c. Abimelech warned 3-7
- d. Abraham confronted 8-13
- e. Sarah returned 14-17
- f. Abimelech blessed 17-18

2. Chapter 21

- a. Isaac born 1-7
- b. Some things never change 8-10
- c. Abraham instructed 11-13
- d. Hagar and Ishmael expelled 14-16
- e. Hagar and Ishmael saved 17-21
- f. Covenant with Abimelech 22-34

2. Observation		3. Interpretation	
What Does It Say?		What Does It Mean?	
Verse		Verse	
	Chapter 20		
1-13	<p>Abraham and Sarah move to Philistia. Sarah is still beautiful and Abraham is still up to old tricks. Abimelech wants Sarah and takes her. God comes to him in a dream and warns him not to touch Sarah. Abimelech protests his innocence and God agrees but tells him to return Sarah and ask for a blessing. Abimelech does as he is told. He confronts Abraham. Abraham reveals his reasons (mainly fear) and also reveals this has been an ongoing practice since he left Ur of the Chaldeans.</p>	1-13	<p>We are not told why Abraham and Sarah moved. Once again, we have the juxtaposition of Abraham meeting with God and then turning around and acting in the flesh. This passage shows us that Abraham is fearful at heart and is judgmental of strangers. By contrast, Abimelech acted with integrity – taking Sarah was according to the rules of royalty at that time – he was only doing what was considered his royal right. He welcomed Abraham to his country. God understands all this but He also wants to make sure that the child of promise is not compromised by men’s interference one more time.</p> <p>It is striking that Abraham has been given God’s promise over and over again and, yet, still resorts to his own devices in response to his own fear.</p> <p>Do Abraham’s attitude and his actions bring to mind times in our lives when we do the same? We claim the promises of God but do we truly believe in the God we say we believe in?</p>

14-18	Abimelech returns Sarah with many gifts and a thousand pieces of silver. All intended to show his innocence in this matter. Abraham prays for Abimelech and his family and they are able to have children again.	14-18	Abimelech shows more integrity than Abraham in this instance. He also follows the commands of God even though no evidence is given that he believes in Abraham's God. God uses and blesses even those who are not part of the chosen in order to accomplish his plans. No one is to be looked on with disdain or hatred, whether or not they are part of God's chosen. We are to treat all people with respect and approach them with the Gospel truth because of our God. This is not something we can drum up in our own human strength. We can only do this through the power of the Holy Spirit.
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	Chapter 21		
1-7	God visits at the prophesied time and Isaac is born. Abraham circumcises Isaac at eight days according to the covenant demands. Sarah marvels over the birth of Isaac and remembers their laughter.	1-7	<p>God's promise is true and Isaac is born. He is named according to God's direction and circumcised according to the covenant. Abraham and Sarah, for all their faults, follow God. God has the last laugh – Isaac means "he laughs."</p> <p>God's promises are true and sure. When we are tempted to doubt we need to turn back to stories in the Bible, such as this, to remind ourselves that we do not see as God sees.</p>
8-13	Isaac grows and eventually is weaned. Abraham has a feast on that day but Ishmael laughs at the proceedings. Sarah is outraged and demands that Hagar and Ishmael be thrown out, again. This time God tells Abraham to listen to Sarah because the promise is through Isaac.	8-13	<p>Given human nature it's not hard to think that the problems revealed when Ishmael was born continued even though Hagar followed God's command and returned. The implication of Ishmael's laughter is that he is laughing in derision. Even though the child of promise is in front of him, Abraham still places great hope in Ishmael. God, once again, has to remind him that Isaac is the one through whom the promise will be fulfilled. God reiterates his promise to make Ishmael a great nation because he is Abraham's son. WE do this, do we not? We know what God has said, we know what he has promised, we know the great salvation he has provided; yet we continue to place our trust in human means and ways.</p>

<p>14-21</p>	<p>Abraham listens to God and sends Hagar and Ishmael away. He provides some bread and water for their journey. Once the water is gone Hagar has Ismael sit under a bush and goes some distance away so as not to watch him die. God comes to her and tells her not to fear because he will take care of Ishmael. He miraculously provides water for them and Ishmael grows in the wilderness, eventually marrying.</p>	<p>14-21</p> <p>This passage is almost an exact parallel of that in Genesis 16:1-16 when Hagar was pregnant with Ishmael. Apparently, the mother's curse works. Hagar was dismissive and arrogant toward Sarah and Ishmael is the same way with Isaac. You have to think that the intervening 16 years were not peaceful and joyful. The provisions provided by Abraham are far too little for the wilderness journey confronting Hagar and Ismael. It's as if Abraham was saying, "You're on your own." This is strange given his obvious attachment to Ishmael. In any case, God's promise to Hagar and Ishmael given in Chapter 16 is restated here. Because Ishmael is Abraham's son God will watch after him and make him into a great nation.</p>
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<p>22-34</p>	<p>Abimelech comes to Abraham in order to execute a covenant based on Abraham acting with integrity as Abimelech had with Abraham. Abraham agrees but then tells Abimelech about a disagreement over a well. Abimelech had not heard about the problem. They made a covenant and Abraham also gave Abimelech additional goods in order to secure the well. Abimelech returns home, satisfied. Abraham plants a tamarisk tree, calls on the name of God, and spends quite a bit of time in the land.</p>	<p>22-34</p> <p>Again, Abimelech proves his character and integrity by approaching Abraham for a covenant. Abraham agrees but tries to get Abimelech's goat in the disagreement over the well. Perhaps his memory of being confronted by Abimelech and his shame at his own sin prompt him to try and even the field. Abimelech does not rise to the insult and, instead, continues to pursue the covenant.</p> <p>How do we deal with those who confront us with our shortcomings? Does it make a difference if we are convicted in our hearts directly by the Holy Spirit, confronted by a loved one, confronted by another believer, or confronted by a non-believer? If we are in the wrong what is the proper attitude no matter who brings it to our attention?</p> <p>Beersheba means "well of the seven" or "well of the oath." The seven ewes might represent seven wells that Abraham is claiming.</p> <p>The tamarisk tree planted by Abraham may have been planted to signify the covenant just made or as a monument to God. Tamarisk trees have multiple uses and are slow-growing. There is a saying you don't plant them for you, you plant them for your grand-children. They also do not grow without great amounts of care. Whatever the reason it was planted, it appears Abraham planned on his family being in this area for a very long time. What have we put in place or "planted" that will be a blessing to future generations?</p>
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4. Correlation		5. Application
Where Else Is It Explained?		What Will I Do About It?
Verse		
	Chapter 20	
1-13	Psalms 51:4; 105:14 Proverbs 16:6 Job 33:15-16 Matthew 1:2	
14-18		
	Chapter 21	
1-7	Matthew 1:2 Luke 3:34 Acts 7:8 Galatians 4:22 Hebrews 11:11	
8-13	Romans 9:7 Galatians 4:29-30 Hebrews 11:18	
14-21		
22-34		

6. Conclusions

7. One Personal Application