

Faith and Joy

Abraham—part 13

Genesis 21:1-14

September 6, 2026

DAY 1: The character of God: faithful

1. Abraham was promised a son as an heir to the land, an heir that would be as many as the stars of heaven. Decades passed without Sarah getting pregnant. And she finally does.

Genesis 21:1 Now the Lord was gracious to Sarah as he had said, and the Lord did for Sarah what he had promised. ² Sarah became pregnant and bore a son to Abraham in his old age, at the very time God had promised him.

2. If you have been following Abraham and Sarah's long story, you are familiar with the seemingly long delay for this occasion to finally occur.

3. What strikes you as we begin this joyful narrative?

4. The writer describes the character of God in three ways.

a. God was gracious to Sarah. Someone is *gracious* to us when they do or act in a way that has more kindness or generosity than we deserve, or someone does something for us that goes far beyond what we deserve. What immediately comes to mind is the fiasco in Genesis 16 when Sarah convinces Abraham to have sex with Hagar, and later blasts away at both Abraham and Hagar. Remembering this, what point is God making at the beginning of this passage and conception?

b. God acted according to what was right. *He* enabled her to become pregnant.

c. God was true to His promises.

5. As you think about God's attitude, actions, and character in this grand story, which of these characteristics of God strikes you the most?

6. What strikes you from today's devotional?

DAY 2: God's character: perfect timing

1. Time is a very important element in this story. There had been a very long wait, a wait that surpassed the human body's ability to conceive.
2. That long wait has been like a long shadow hovering over the long story of Abraham and Sarah, raising the specter of doubt for Abraham, Sarah, and us.
3. That is one reason why the author uses repetition to drive home this issue about time—from God's point of view!

*Genesis 21:1 **Now** the Lord was gracious to Sarah as he had said, and the Lord did for Sarah what he had promised. ² Sarah became pregnant and bore a son to Abraham **in his old age, at the very time** God had promised him.*

*Genesis 21:4 When his son Isaac was eight days old, Abraham circumcised him, as God commanded him. ⁵ **Abraham was a hundred years old** when his son Isaac was born to him.*

*⁶ Sarah said, "God has brought me laughter, and everyone who hears about this will laugh with me." ⁷ And she added, "Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? Yet I have borne him a son **in his old age**.*

4. On four different occasions God made known His promise of an heir with respect to timing. (Gen. 17:21; 18:10, 14; 21:2)
5. In retrospect we can begin to see why God's timing, though very long to us, was perfect. What strikes you about God's timing? Why is this important?
6. God was obviously building Abraham and Sarah's faith involving His promises, His purpose, and His provision of a savior.
7. Sarah answers the question as to why this pregnancy and birth took so long. No one could say it "just happened," or "it was just a coincidence."
*Genesis 21:6 Sarah said, "God has brought me laughter, and everyone who hears about this will laugh with me." ⁷ And she added, "**Who would have said to** Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? **Yet** I have borne him a son in his old age."*
8. What strikes you from today's devotional?

DAY 3: Joy

1. You may remember earlier in our study when Sarah overheard messengers talking to God about an upcoming pregnancy for her. She was inside her tent and when she heard this she laughed to herself (quietly) but it was a laughter of derision and scorn. She had heard messages like this through Abraham, but she was so old she had nothing left but a laugh of contempt.

2. But this time, Sarah's laughter is on the completely opposite end of the spectrum.

Genesis 21:6 Sarah said, "God has brought me laughter, and everyone who hears about this will laugh with me." ⁷ And she added, "Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? Yet I have borne him a son in his old age."

3. Sarah's joy is due to two major reasons.

a. The long-awaited and hoped for son did arrive!!!

b. She now has verifiable evidence that the promises of God and the word of God are true. God IS faithful.

4. Her joy is not just about the past and present. She realizes that God is telling a story through their lives that affects not only their future but *everyone's* future!

5. It is a deeper joy. It is the joy of realizing that God is God, that He is telling a good story in my life and through my life, and that even though there are times when I wonder about the goodness of God's story, I am **sure** God is good, and the ending and epilogue of this story will be exceedingly good. This joy is more than a joyous outcome along the way. It is the surety of an eternal long joy to come.

Psalms 126:1 When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion, we were like those who dreamed. ² Our mouths were filled with laughter, our tongues with songs of joy. Then it was said among the nations, "The Lord has done great things for them." ³ The Lord has done great things for us, and we are filled with joy.

Heaven above is softer blue, earth around is sweeter green,
Something lives in every hue, Christless eyes have never seen,
Birds with gladder songs o'er flow, flowers with deeper beauties shine
Since I know as now I know, I am His and He is mine.

6. What strikes you from today's devotional?

DAY 4: Parallel #1: Isaac and Jesus' birth meaning

1. One of the great attributes of the Old Testament is what biblical scholars call foreshadowing. Foreshadowing is giving some kind of hint or picture of things to come. The greatest number of foreshadowing has to do with God's plan of salvation, providing a savior for man.

a. First, both Isaac and Jesus were promised by God and referred to as "seed" and "son." In Gen. 3:15 God tells Satan that the seed of Eve will metaphorically crush his head. Isa. 7:14 tells us that a virgin will give birth to a son. Hundreds of prophecies foreshadow the birth of Jesus.

b. Second, with both Isaac and Jesus, there was significant delay between the promised birth and the actual birth. For Abraham and Sarah the delay was between twenty-five and thirty years. For Jesus the delay was two thousand years.

c. Third, there is remarkable similarity with both Sarah and Mary, the mother of Jesus, when they heard the announcement of a son to be born. Sarah said, "Will I really have a child when I am old?" Mary asked, "How will this be...? The answers given were virtually identical. Sarah heard, "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" Mary heard, "Nothing is impossible with God."

d. Fourth, the names of the two boys were given ahead of time by God and had symbolic meaning. Jesus means "He will save His people from their sins."

e. Fifth, both births occurred at God's appointed time. For Isaac, there are four different references regarding the time of his birth. "...by this time next year....about this time next year....at the appointed time....at the very time..."

*Galatians 4:4 **But when the set time had fully come**, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law,* ⁵ *to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship.* ^e

⁶ *Because you are his sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, Father."* ⁷ *So you are no longer a slave, but God's child; and since you are his child, God has made you also an heir.*

f. Sixth, both births required a miracle. For Abraham and Sarah it involved a miracle of their body's ability to conceive, since they were way past the age of conception. For Mary it involved a conception without a blood father.

g. Seventh, there is the joy of both women. Sarah joyously laughed at Isaac's birth, and Mary rejoiced at the announcement that a savior would be born to her. Of course, Mary's joy is now every Christian's joy who has tasted at the wonder of God's mercy and forgiveness, and the wondrous grace of God.

2. What strikes you from today's devotional?

DAY 5: Parallel #2: Isaac and the new birth

*Romans 4:18 Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed and so became the father of many nations, just as it had been said to him, “So shall your offspring be.”¹⁹ Without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead—since he was about a hundred years old—and that Sarah’s womb was also dead.²⁰ Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God,²¹ being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised.²² **This is why “it was credited to him as righteousness”***

1. The spiritual parallel to Isaac’s birth illustrates the new birth, being born again.

a. First, it was impossible for Isaac to be born. Abraham and Sarah were “dead” as to procreation ability. The bible says the same thing about us. We are “dead in our sins,” meaning is no innate ability within ourselves to change our very sin nature (Eph. 2:1).

(No one will ever want to be saved by God until they come to the stark realization about their own lostness. This is what Jesus told Nicodemus, a very religious Jewish pharisee).

John 3:3 Jesus replied, “Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again.

b. Second, Abraham became convinced that there would be no birth through Sarah without divine intervention. The same is true of the new birth. No one is born again because they are good enough, try hard enough, or are religious enough.

John 3:5 Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit.⁶ Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit.

(Salvation is only possible by the gift of God and power of God).

c. Third, what happened to and for Abraham and Isaac is meant to happen to and for us!

*Romans 3:23 .” The words “it was credited to him” **were written not for him alone,²⁴ but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness**—for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead.²⁵ He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.*

2. What strikes you from today’s devotional?