



## Genesis 21

This is another (several yes') chapter. If I asked you to read this chapter before hand it would not be totally fair. As with many chapters in the Bible this one begins with backstory from another chapter. Sarah has been told by God that she will bare a child. As it was, she was promised this when she was a lot younger. Through the years God has not let her conceive. I get the feeling that God wanted to play out other scenarios first.

Sarah's handmaiden Hagar needed to birth a child through Abraham (Sarah's husband). A rouge nation in the line of Ishmael (Hagar's son) needed to be made. The patience and faith of these two old people needed to be galvanized. Through failure and time, Abraham and Sarah are finally willing to listen to God. This chapter 21 opens with God saying yes. Yes, you will bare a son now. Earlier, Sarah had laughed at this notion because she was 90 years old. Abraham was 100. How many people around that age give birth and live to tell about it?

Now Sarah jokingly talks about laughing at God as she finds out she is pregnant. She does indeed conceive a boy named Isaac. That is where God usually does his best work. Far too often we assume silence means no. Sometimes we believe that distance from prayer is a decision by God of no. Yet, this chapter tests that theory. Lost in all this is God keeping his promise while still being able to be the God of miracles. In this chapter God does not stop there.

Sarah has some attitude. She causes some of the grief by asking Abraham to sleep with her hand maiden. As it was, Abraham becomes fond of the boy. It is his first-born son. I think he rather likes Hagar as well. Sarah being Sarah decided enough was enough. Her son Isaac was their child not Ishmael. Sarah nags Abraham to send the boy and mother away. It's fascinating that God intervenes and reassures Abraham that Ishmael will be ok. I equally find it interesting that Abraham sent Hagar and Ishmael into the wilderness with very little food or water. Was this Sarah's idea?

So, God says "yes" to Abraham. Your seed will be a great nation. I have said before God keeps his word. Out goes Hagar and her son. It appears that they will die when the water and food run out. Was that Sarah's plan? Then God intervenes yet again. He tells Hagar to keep up good cheer. Her son will indeed be a great nation. I love it that in that moment God opens her eyes and she see's a spring of water. Even though God wanted Sarah to birth a nation, he gave Hagar the same privilege.

I believe that God takes what we see and do and makes it better. We like to go our own way. Because God sits outside time, he has the ability to fix our messes. He had made a promise to Abraham. Although Abraham took matters in his own hand with Hagar, God made it work out for all. There is a warning in this chapter. God kept his word. He said yes. Yet, this Ishmael became the Arab nations. They have been at odds with Isaac and his nation for thousands of years. Yes, is not always the perfect answer.

Finally, I do want to mention the last part of this chapter. It's a small yes from God. Abraham in his stupidity decided to take matters in his own hands once again. In chapter 20 he is afraid of his wife's beauty. It was not uncommon for a king to take a woman and kill the husband. Abraham sends Sarah to king Abimelech to spare his own life. It's a really dumb act by

Abraham. God intervenes yet again and tells the king to give her back or he will die. At the end of our chapter 21 we have Abimelech returning to the scene. This time the king calls on his new friend Abraham to remain his ally and friend. They make a pact because Abimelech is afraid of Abraham's God now. It's a stretch but God worked on this friendship before all this mess started. He said to Abraham that he would protect him. In a small way God continued to say yes even after Abraham and his wife made such a big mess of things.