

CHAPTER 20

THEME: Abraham misrepresents Sarah.

Chapter 20 seems about as necessary as a fifth leg on a cow. It is a chapter that you feel as if you would like to leave out, because in it Abraham repeats the same sin which he committed when he went down into the land of Egypt and lied concerning Sarah, saying, "She is my sister." It is the same sordid story, but this chapter is put here for a very important reason. Abraham and Sarah are going to have to deal with this sin before they can have Isaac, before they can have the blessing. May I say to you, until you and I are willing to deal with the sin in our lives, there is no blessing for us.

ABRAHAM MISREPRESENTS SARAH

I am going to hit just the high points of chapter 20.

And Abraham journeyed from thence toward the south country, and dwelled between Kadesh and Shur, and sojourned in Gerar.

Gen 20:1-2 And Abraham journeyed from there to the South, and dwelt between Kadesh and Shur, and stayed in Gerar. Now Abraham said of Sarah his wife, "She is my sister." And Abimelech king of Gerar sent and took Sarah.

This is quite interesting. Do you think that Sarah was beautiful? Well, at this time she is almost ninety years old, and she's beautiful. Not many senior citizens can qualify in this particular department.

Notice also that Abraham is getting quite far south in the land. He has gone beyond Kadesh—Barnea where the children of Israel later came up from Egypt and refused to enter the land. Abraham has gone down to Gerar, which I do not think he should have done, but be that as it may, he lies about Sarah again.

I want you notice Abraham's confession because this is the thing which makes this chapter important and reveals the fact that Abraham and Sarah cannot have Isaac until they deal with this sin that is in their lives—and it goes way back.

Gen 20:3-5 But God came to Abimelech in a dream by night, and said to him, "Indeed you are a dead man because of the woman whom you have taken, for she is a man's wife." But Abimelech had not come near her; and he said, "Lord, will You slay a righteous nation also? Did he not say to me, 'She is my sister'? And she, even she herself said, 'He is my brother.' In the integrity of my heart and innocence of my hands I have done this."

God protects Sarah again!

Gen 20:6-8 And God said to him in a dream, "Yes, I know that you did this in the integrity of your heart. For I also withheld you from sinning against Me; therefore I did not let you touch her. Now therefore, restore the man's wife; for he is a prophet, and he will pray for you and you shall live. But if you do not restore her, know that you shall surely die, you and all who are yours." So Abimelech rose early in the morning, called all his servants, and told all these things in their hearing; and the men were very much afraid.

Notice: Abimelech is said to have integrity in his heart, yet being pagan.

Do you judge people by the outward appearance or the integrity of their heart?

Gen 20:9-11 And Abimelech called Abraham and said to him, "What have you done to us? How have I offended you, that you have brought on me and on my kingdom a great sin? You have done deeds to me that ought not to be done." Then Abimelech said to Abraham, "What did you have in view, that you have done this thing?" And Abraham said, "Because I thought, surely the fear of God is not in this place; and they will kill me on account of my wife.

Abraham is now talking to Abimelech who is greatly disturbed that Abraham would do a thing like lying about his wife. Again, Abraham was not trusting God. He felt that he was moving down into a godless place, but he finds out that Abimelech has a high sense of what is right and wrong. Abimelech puts a tremendous value upon character and apparently is a man who knows God. Poor Abraham doesn't look good by the side of Abimelech here. – McGee

Gen 20:12 But indeed she is truly my sister. She is the daughter of my father, but not the daughter of my mother; and she became my wife.

Abraham lets it all out now. He says, "To tell the truth, it's half a lie. Sarah is my half sister, and she is my wife." – McGee

Confession – Finally! Have you ever been there? Have something you have not confessed to God?

Gen 20:13 And it came to pass, when God caused me to wander from my father's house, that I said to her, 'This is your kindness that you should do for me: in every place, wherever we go, say of me, "He is my brother." ' ' "

Abraham did not have complete confidence and trust in God, and so when they started out, he and Sarah made a pact that anywhere they went where it looked as if Abraham might be killed because of his wife, Sarah would say that Abraham was her brother. Abraham and Sarah thought that that would keep Abraham from being killed. They made that little agreement, and they had used it down in Egypt, and here they have used it again. This sin must be dealt with before God is going to hear and answer Abraham's prayer in sending a son. Isaac will not be born until this is dealt with.

How many Christians are there who will not judge sin in their lives, and as a result, there is no blessing in their lives? If those who are in places of leadership in our fundamental churches would confess their sins and deal with the sins that are in their lives, I frankly believe that we could have revival. I do not believe there will be any blessing until sin is dealt with. Listen to Paul in 1 Corinthians: "But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world" (1Co_11:28-32). Blessing is being withheld from the church and from the lives of many believers because we will not deal with the sin in our lives. This is a tremendous spiritual lesson here in the twentieth chapter of the Book of Genesis. – McGee

Gen 20:14-18 *Then Abimelech took sheep, oxen, and male and female servants, and gave them to Abraham; and he restored Sarah his wife to him. And Abimelech said, "See, my land is before you; dwell where it pleases you." Then to Sarah he said, "Behold, I have given your brother a thousand pieces of silver; indeed this vindicates you before all who are with you and before everybody." Thus she was rebuked. So Abraham prayed to God; and God healed Abimelech, his wife, and his female servants. Then they bore children; for the LORD had closed up all the wombs of the house of Abimelech because of Sarah, Abraham's wife.*

It seems incredible to us that Abraham would again try to pass off Sarah as his sister within twenty years of the same blunder with Pharaoh— incredible, that is, until we remember our own perpetual proneness to sin! The incident with Abimelech in Gerar is almost a replay of Abraham's duplicity in Egypt (Gen_12:10-17). God intervened to work out His purposes in the birth of Isaac, which might otherwise have been frustrated. He threatened Abimelech with death. He is more than just a spectator on the sidelines of history. He can overrule the evil of His people, even through the lives of the unregenerate. The pagan Abimelech acted more righteously in this incident than Abraham, the "friend of God." (Abimelech is a title, and not a proper name.) It is shameful when a believer has to be justly rebuked by a man of the world! When a half-truth is presented as the whole truth, it is an untruth. Abraham even tried to shift some of the blame onto God for making him wander in the first place. He would have been wiser to humbly acknowledge his guilt. Nevertheless, he was still God's man. And so the Lord sent Abimelech to him so that Abraham would pray that his household be healed of its barrenness.

The expression "this vindicates you" (v. 16) is literally "it is a covering of the eyes," meaning a gift given for the purpose of appeasing. Thus it might read, "It is given to you as a payment in satisfaction as evidence to all who are with you and to all men that the wrong has been righted." - Believers' Bible Commentary

Skipping forward....

Genesis 21:22-24 *And it came to pass at that time that Abimelech and Phichol, the commander of his army, spoke to Abraham, saying, "God is with you in all that you do. Now therefore, swear to me by God that you will not deal falsely with me, with my offspring, or with my posterity; but that according to the kindness that I have done to you, you will do to me and to the land in which you have dwelt." And Abraham said, "I will swear."*

Do others say to you "God is with you in all that you do"?

In other words, Abimelech wants to make a contract or a treaty with this man Abraham—and they become good friends because of this. Notice: How Abraham approached this conflict? How did Abimelech receive this news?

Gen 21:25-28 *Then Abraham rebuked Abimelech because of a well of water which Abimelech's servants had seized. And Abimelech said, "I do not know who has done this thing; you did not tell me, nor had I heard of it until today." So Abraham took sheep and oxen and gave them to Abimelech, and the two of them made a covenant. And Abraham set seven ewe lambs of the flock by themselves.*

21:22-34 The Abimelech in verse 22 is not necessarily the same one as in chapter 20. This chieftain's servants had taken a well of water from Abraham's men. When Abimelech and Abraham made a treaty of friendship, the patriarch told Abimelech about the well that had been seized. The result was a

covenant granting the well to Abraham. He promptly named it Beersheba ("well of the oath"). The place later became a city, marking the southernmost boundary of the land. Abraham planted a tamarisk tree as a memorial. – Believers' Bible Commentary

Gen 21:29-34 Then Abimelech asked Abraham, "What is the meaning of these seven ewe lambs which you have set by themselves?" And he said, "You will take these seven ewe lambs from my hand, that they may be my witness that I have dug this well." Therefore, he called that place Beersheba, because the two of them swore an oath there. Thus they made a covenant at Beersheba. So Abimelech rose with Phichol, the commander of his army, and they returned to the land of the Philistines. Then Abraham planted a tamarisk tree in Beersheba, and there called on the name of the LORD, the Everlasting God. And Abraham stayed in the land of the Philistines many days.

Abraham is calling upon God's name everywhere he goes. We are told later that Abraham was always a stranger and a pilgrim in this land that God had promised to him, and this is an evidence of it.- McGee