## Genesis 21 – God's Promises to Ishmael and his descendants

Are you the result of a plan B? The result of someone else's bad choice? How to make sense of it?

- Plan A: Abraham & Sarah. God's promise: Gen 12:1-3
- Plan B: Abraham & Sarah + Hagar. Gen 16. Culturally acceptable. Something "good" instead of the best. Hurts, Hagar's fleeing, God's intervention, Ishmael!

But God still had plan A in mind. God comes through! Gen 21. Isaac!

God fulfills his promises, is faithful. Do we believe Him? - Heb 11:11

What kind of laughter do you have about God's promises? How has God come through for you?

Three laughs: 1) Abraham Gen 17:17; 2) Sarah Gen 18:12; 3) Sarah now: 21:6-7

"Who would have said that God would send his son to die to redeem me from my sin!"

Gen 21 – Isaac: Circumcised on the 8<sup>th</sup> day; weaning celebration 3 yrs later – Ishmael mocks. Sarah notices the incompatibility between plan A & B, Abraham not. "Get rid of..." v10. God speaks up now: "listen to Sarah", the Promise is through plan A – it always has been.

Cast out, drive out, divorce plan B. Surrender to God.

- For Sarah: this is easiest But you have to wait for God's time!
- For Abraham: this is hard. A crisis re. his firstborn son and ambitions for him. But he still had plan A.
- For Hagar & Ishmael: are they the rubbish of the story to be disposed off? Despair, left to die, as trash should.

But God steps in. You may be cast out of your own plan, but you are cast into His plan! God never ruins lives!

God decrees plan A's, he permits plan B's (what he decrees but does not let us know).

"God heard". Ishmael="Heard by God". The one who sees her (Lahai Roi 16:14) made her see the well.

v20: God was with the boy! An archer. Egyptian wife. 12 nations: Gen 25:12-18.

<u>Today's Arab world</u> wants to have Abraham's blessing through Ishmael through Islam; is a mixture of:

- descendants of Joktan (Gen 10:25, 1 Chr 1:20-23) Eber's son, a descendant of Shem
- descendants of Ishmael. Mohammed, the prophet of Islam, is a descendant of Nebaioth, Ishmael's oldest son.
- Descendants of the sons of Keturah, the wife Abraham took after Sarah passed away. Gen 25:1-6.

Plan B: full of <u>promises God made to Ishmael</u>, and plans. Something God did not have to do. Gen 16 & 21. "It was God who designated the name Ishmael, an everlasting testimony of God's concern for the weak, the afflicted and those who are unjustly treated." And there is more, they *have a plan in the future!* 

- 16:10 "I will so increase your (Hagar) descendants that they will be too numerous to count."
- 17:20, 21:18 become a *great nation* (a term often meaning many ethnic groups)
- 16:12 a wild donkey of a man. Cf Job 39:5-8. Cf Bedouins. Cf tents of Kedar. Prophetic
- 17:20 God will bless Ishmael; God assures the blessing 21:11-13. The first non-covenant people in Scripture to receive a blessing!

Isaac (plan A) and descendants are to be agents of God's mission (through a covenant); Ishmael and descendants (plan B) receive a blessing. Both receive grace by faith, the result of God's mission.

<u>Isaiah 60: God plans to bring salvation to the non-covenant peoples</u>. Arab peoples at the New Jerusalem: Isa 60:6; comp. with Gen. 25:1-6, 1 Chr 1:20, 32, Isa 60:7; comp. with Gen. 25: 12-17. NT: Mt 2:11; Acts 2:11; Gal 1:16-18 & 2 Cor 11:32.

<u>Islam's own attempt</u>: legalism cf Gal 4:21-31. Flees suffering, seeks political and military power (Hijra) >< Christ.

Plan A or Plan B? The plan of plans: Eph 1:4; 2 Tim 1:9 from before the creation of the world. Entrust yourself to the Planner of plans? Join Him as He reveals His plan to the descendants of Ishmael.