Genesis Chapter 16 The Test of Waiting

I. God made promise to Abraham first by implication.

A. 12:2,3 General; gets more specific as time goes on

B. 21:12 Clarification and narrowing of the promise – to a specific *seed*

(descendent); not plural, descendants; – compare Galatians 3:16.

Ultimate fulfillment is singular, ultimately, Christ.

C. Genesis 16 ten years have passed. Imagine waiting on child to be born and 10

years pass! Impatience sets in. Abraham at this time is 85 and Sarah, 75.

D. Note the anxiety and possibly fear 15:2,3;8. Expressions of uncertainty and doubt.

Note God’s answer :

*And, behold, the word of the LORD came unto him, saying, This shall not be thine heir; but he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir. (Genesis 15:4)*

*And he said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed… (Genesis 15:13)*

II. The Test at this Point was to Believe God. To believe God in spite of all circumstances and appearances. Such is the stuff that all of Abraham’s life is made of. Think of this principle in relation to Romans 8:28

III. God could have caused Sarah to get pregnant the moment the first promise was made! But He didn’t!

16:1 compare 15:2 Should Abram settle for an adopted seed? God replies clearly “No!”. But remember – Sarai at this point is not designated to be the mother. Abram in chapter 16 wasn’t sure as of yet that Sarai would be the mother. See 17:15-17. 23 years elapse before Sarai (Sarah) is designated as the mother.

Notice the length of time that had passed and the progressive revelation. Genesis 12:7 was not a detailed blueprint. But Abraham and Sarah were going to learn that it wouldn’t be an “heir” of the household, nor a child through Hagar, but a physical descendant of both Abraham and Sarah.

This raises the question of why the Lord didn’t tell them and explain it all ahead of time?

1. God desires faith (trust) to grow and develop. For this it takes pressure and tension and time. God doesn’t typically explain before time. Retrospect provides more light than prospect. See again Romans 8:28

2. Implications of truth are learned slowly. Note the slow process (from our human perspective) the Lord brought Abraham and Sarah through. 23 years! Understanding God’s modus operandi comes slowly through time.

Learning spiritual truth requires more learning, more, more and more. Time is essential. It requires dedication and the study of God’s Word.

3. The Lord wants us to learn well more than He wants us to learn quickly. Had it been His purpose He could have explained it all to Abraham and Sarah in 5 minutes or less.

4. Before Abraham’s correct understanding came Abraham’s misunderstanding. This is part of the learning process. Breaking down and building again. It’s not unusual that just when you think you’ve “got it” something else comes along and drives you to your knees and to the Word.

a. Time is required to come to correct understanding

b. Trust is developed through it all

5. Abram made lots of mistakes and yet these are powerful means of learning truth. One can often be led to say, “I’ll never do that again.” (for the hundredth time)

**Chapter 16 It’s not so much a question about what the will of God is – it’s the when? and the how?**

6. This is perhaps one of the hardest test we face – the test of waiting. Several potential problems that can develop:

a. Impatience

b. Confusion

(1) What did I do to cause this? Any unconfessed sin?

(2) What part should I play to get this done?

(3) Is there something I should do that I haven’t done?

Chapter 16 flows directly out of this type of “reasoning”. A slave girl, a legal loophole, a carnal

resolve – result? An entanglement that 4,000 years and the United Nations haven’t (and won’t)

been able to straighten out to this day! As Proverbs 3:5 warns, we are not to lean (rely) on our

own understanding.

However observe the magnitude of God’s grace that flows from this situation.

16:7 Here is the first mention in Scripture of the angel of the LORD. Most likely a preincarnate appearance of the second Person of the Trinity. Notice verse 13. The first revelation of the Angel of the LORD is seen in the salvation of Hagar.

Not to one seeking God, but to one fleeing.

Not to Abram the great patriarch, but to Hagar.

Not to a man but to a woman

Not to an heir but to a fugitive, an outcast.

Not to one of high rank but to a slave girl. Compare John 4.

*“To the outcast on her knees you are the God Who really sees”*

The angel of the LORD rescues her before she goes back to Egypt, bondage and darkness. See

also Exodus 3:2;9-11;13

Genesis 16 and 21 should be compared and noted for the applications:

1. Historically – Abraham and Sarah’s efforts to “help God out”

2. Doctrinally – Law (self-effort) and Grace.

3. Practically – God’s care for the outcast and “outsiders”

4. Devotionally – Abraham and his sons. See 17:18. Think of what 21:14 must have meant!

5. Dispensationally – Galatians 4:21-31 and the allegory of Sarah and Hagar. Isaac and Ishmael.

Two Covenants – Galatians 4:24

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| Genesis 16 Go back. Stay in tent | Genesis 21 Cast out the bondwoman |
| Ishmael – of the bondwoman | Isaac – of the freewoman |
| Ishmael – the flesh | Isaac – the promise |
| Covenant of Law | Covenant of Grace |

Once again, we notice how the New Testament uses the Old Testament. We also see how the

accurate recording of these historical events preserves, upholds, and illuminates the doctrinal

truths of Scripture.