

Genesis 16:11

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And the angel of the LORD said unto her, Behold, thou art with child, and shalt bear a son, and shalt call his name Ishmael; because the LORD hath heard thy affliction.

Analysis

And the angel of the LORD said unto her, Behold, thou art with child, and shalt bear a son, and shal... This passage is part of the Abrahamic narratives which shift from universal human history to God's particular covenant people. The Abraham cycle (Genesis 12-25) demonstrates God's sovereign election, covenant faithfulness, and the development of faith through testing and promise fulfillment.

Central themes include God's unconditional covenant promises (land, descendants, blessing to nations), the call to faith and obedience, the testing of faith through delays and impossibilities, the contrast between divine promises and human schemes, and God's gracious persistence despite human failures. Abraham emerges as the father of faith whose trust in God's promises becomes the model for all believers (Romans 4, Galatians 3, Hebrews 11).

Theologically, these narratives establish:

1. salvation by grace through faith rather than works
2. covenant as God's gracious initiative binding Himself to His people
3. the necessity of patient trust when promises seem impossible
4. the consequences of attempting to fulfill God's promises through human effort
5. the pattern of divine testing producing mature faith.

The Abraham cycle foreshadows Christ as the ultimate seed through whom blessing extends to all nations (Galatians 3:16).

Historical Context

The patriarchal narratives (Genesis 12-50) reflect the cultural, social, and legal customs of the ancient Near East during the Middle Bronze Age (2000-1500 BCE). Archaeological discoveries including the Mari tablets, Nuzi tablets, and Egyptian records confirm many details: nomadic pastoralism, covenant-making ceremonies, marriage customs, property laws, and international travel patterns described in Genesis.

The cultural practices reflected include: treaty/covenant forms (Genesis 15), bride-price customs (Genesis 24, 29), inheritance laws favoring firstborn sons (Genesis 25, 27), adoption practices (Genesis 15, 30), levirate-type arrangements (Genesis 38), and Egyptian administrative systems (Genesis 41, 47). These parallels confirm Genesis's historical reliability while showing how God worked within ancient cultural frameworks to accomplish His purposes.

For later Israelites, these narratives established their identity as Abraham's descendants, explained their claim to Canaan, justified their possession of Joseph's bones (Exodus 13:19), and provided models of faith despite imperfection. The patriarchs' failures and God's faithfulness encouraged Israel that covenant relationship depended on God's grace rather than human merit. The movement from Mesopotamia to Canaan to Egypt set the stage for the Exodus and conquest narratives.

Related Passages

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. How does this verse contribute to the biblical doctrine of creation, fall, or redemption?
2. How does this passage challenge modern cultural assumptions about identity, purpose, or morality?
3. How does this verse fit into the broader biblical story culminating in Christ?

Interlinear Text

וַיֹּאמֶר	לָהּ	מֵלַאךְ	יְהוָה	הִנֵּה		
said	H0	And the angel	because the LORD	unto her Behold		
H559		H4397	H3068	H2009		
	הָיָה	וְיָלַדְתָּ	בֵּן	וְקָרָאתָ	שְׁמוֹ	יִשְׁמָעֵאל
	thou art with child	and shalt bear	a son	and shalt call	his name	Ishmael
	H2030	H3205	H1121	H7121	H8034	H3458
כִּי	שָׁמַע	יְהוָה	אֶל	עֲנִיָּתוֹ		
H3588	hath heard	because the LORD	H413	thy affliction		
	H8085	H3068		H6040		

Additional Cross-References

Exodus 3:7 (References Lord): And the LORD said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows;

Isaiah 7:14 (References Lord): Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.

Psalms 22:24 (Parallel theme): For he hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted; neither hath he hid his face from him; but when he cried unto him, he heard.

Genesis 17:19 (Parallel theme): And God said, Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed; and thou shalt call his name Isaac: and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his seed after him.

1 Samuel 1:20 (References Lord): Wherefore it came to pass, when the time was come about after Hannah had conceived, that she bare a son, and called his name Samuel, saying, Because I have asked him of the LORD.

Job 38:41 (Parallel theme): Who provideth for the raven his food? when his young ones cry unto God, they wander for lack of meat.

Exodus 3:9 (Parallel theme): Now therefore, behold, the cry of the children of Israel is come unto me: and I have also seen the oppression wherewith the Egyptians oppress them.

Luke 1:63 (Parallel theme): And he asked for a writing table, and wrote, saying, His name is John. And they marvelled all.

Luke 1:13 (Parallel theme): But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John.

Luke 1:31 (Parallel theme): And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS.