

Genesis 21:10

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Wherefore she said unto Abraham, Cast out this bondwoman and her son: for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, even with Isaac.

Analysis

Wherefore she said unto Abraham, Cast out this bondwoman and her son: for the son of this bondwoman ... 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

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. How does this verse deepen our understanding of God's character and His relationship with creation?
2. What specific changes in thinking or behavior does this verse call us to make?
3. In what ways does this narrative foreshadow or typify aspects of Christ's redemptive work?

Interlinear Text

וַתֹּאמֶר	לְאַבְרָהָם	גֵּר שֶׁ	הָאֲמָהָה	הִזָּאת	
Wherefore she said	unto Abraham	Cast out	of this bondwoman		
H559	H85	H1644	H519	H2063	H853
וּבֶן־יִ	לֹא	יִרְשׁ	וּבֶן־יִ	הָאֲמָהָה	
and her son		shall not be heir	and her son	of this bondwoman	
H1121	H3588	H3423	H1121	H519	
עִם הִזָּאת	וּבֶן־יִ	עִם	יִצְחָק:		
	and her son		even with Isaac		
H2063	H5973	H5973	H3327		

Additional Cross-References

John 8:35 (Parallel theme): And the servant abideth not in the house for ever: but the Son abideth ever.

1 John 2:19 (Parallel theme): They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.

Matthew 22:13 (Parallel theme): Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Genesis 25:19 (References Abraham): And these are the generations of Isaac, Abraham's son: Abraham begat Isaac:

Galatians 3:18 (References Abraham): For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise: but God gave it to Abraham by promise.

Galatians 4:7 (Parallel theme): Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.

1 Peter 1:4 (Parallel theme): To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you,

Genesis 17:21 (Parallel theme): But my covenant will I establish with Isaac, which Sarah shall bear unto thee at this set time in the next year.

Genesis 20:11 (References Abraham): And Abraham said, Because I thought, Surely the fear of God is not in this place; and they will slay me for my wife's sake.

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.