

Genesis 21:7

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And she said, Who would have said unto Abraham, that Sarah should have given children suck? for I have born him a son in his old age.

Analysis

And she said, Who would have said unto Abraham, that Sarah should have given children suck? for I ha... 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

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

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. How does this verse fit into the broader biblical story culminating in Christ?

Interlinear Text

וַתֹּאמֶר	מִי	מִלַּל	לְאַבְרָהָם	הֵינִי יֹקֵה	בֶּן
And she said	H4310	Who would have said	unto Abraham	suck	him a son
H559		H4448	H85	H3243	H1121
שָׂרָה	כִּי	יָלַדְתִּי	בֶּן	לְזִקְנָיו:	
that Sarah	H3588	for I have born	him a son	in his old age	
H8283		H3205	H1121	H2208	

Additional Cross-References

Isaiah 66:8 (Parallel theme): Who hath heard such a thing? who hath seen such things? Shall the earth be made to bring forth in one day? or shall a nation be born at once? for as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children.

Ephesians 3:10 (Parallel theme): To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God,

Numbers 23:23 (Parallel theme): Surely there is no enchantment against Jacob, neither is there any divination against Israel: according to this time it shall be said of Jacob and of Israel, What hath God wrought!

2 Thessalonians 1:10 (Parallel theme): When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day.