

January 9

Scriptures: Read Genesis 16 & 17

Key Verse: “When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to Abram and said to him, ‘I am Almighty God; walk before Me and be blameless’.”(Genesis 17:1)

Overview

Abram had been living in the land for ten years already and still did not have the son God had promised him. He and his wife were getting older and becoming discouraged. Rather than waiting for the perfect timing of the Lord, they took the matter upon themselves and jumped ahead, leading to many troubles and strife. Out of desperation, Abram heeded the voice of his wife Sari to follow the common heathen custom and lie with her maidservant so that she might bear a child for her. He took heed to the wrong voice, for this was not what God told him to do, nor was it His plan. The promised seed was to come from Abram’s wife Sarai. Abram was in a tight situation, for Sarai complained and put the blame on him. In order to keep the peace, the only solution was to let Sarai have her way and do with Hagar what she wanted.

In those days, in the laws of the land, a servant had no rights. Hagar was forced to flee (‘Hagar’ means ‘to escape’ or ‘leave’) from the harshness of her mistress, but God did not abandon her. For the first time in the Bible we see the appearance of the Angel of the Lord who speaks and comforts Hagar as though he were the Lord Himself. She is told to return and submit to her mistress, then he prophesied that she would have many descendants and prophesied concerning the child within her womb whom he says is to be called Ishmael meaning “God has heard”. Hagar was encouraged and proclaimed that God lives and sees.

Thirteen years after Ishmael was born, the Lord once again appeared to Abram in a new revelation of Himself – “I am Almighty God”, “El Shadai”, expressing God’s greatness and omnipotence (all-powerful). Abram needed to be reassured that nothing was impossible for God and to be exhorted to walk blameless before Him. Before God instituted the rite of circumcision, which was to be a covenant sign that they were set apart for Him, God changed Abram’s name, meaning “exalted father” to “Abraham” meaning “father of a multitude”, for through his promised seed all nations of the earth would be spiritually blessed. Sarai’s name was also changed to Sarah (meaning “princess”) and Abraham was told that from her would come the child of promise. Abraham cried out, concerning Ishmael, requesting that he would be blessed. God heard his cry and promised to bless Ishmael and make his descendants many. The Lord’s covenant would be established with Isaac, the son Abraham and Sarah were to have one year later. In renewal of the covenant, Ishmael at the age of 13, and Abraham at the age of 99, along with all the other males of his household were circumcised as God commanded.

The exhortation that God gave to Abraham is one we should take for ourselves. Let us walk blamelessly before the world.

Prayer

O God we praise You for Your promises and for Your perfect timing in their fulfillment. Grant us Your grace that we may walk blameless before You and before the world.