

HAGAR

Key Passages: Gen 15:1-5, 16:1-16, 21:13-20, 25:12; Gal 4:22-23, 27-31

Hagar is introduced shortly after Abraham's return from rescuing Lot and his encounter with Melchizedek. The first set of verses don't directly talk about Hagar, but they do establish the background for one of the essential truths.

Gen 15:1 "After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision, saying, "Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your exceedingly great reward."

Unlike Melchizedek, who many mistakenly believe was a Christophany, here, "the word of the LORD" is indeed a Christophany... An appearance of Jesus in the Old Testament. We can look at **John 1:1** to help illustrate the point. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the **Word was God.**"

Gen 15:2 "But Abram said, "Lord GOD, what will You give me, seeing I go childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?"

Gen 15:3 "Then Abram said, "Look, You have given me no offspring; indeed one born in my house is my heir!"

Was Abraham exhibiting doubt by pointing out the obvious?

Gen 15:4 "And behold, the word of the LORD came to him, saying, "This one shall not be your heir, but one who will come from your own body shall be your heir."

Gen 15:5 "Then He brought him outside and said, "Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them." And He said to him, "So shall your descendants be."

This is an important promise, the implications of which will be made clear later on. But notice how Abraham refers to the "word of the LORD" as "Lord GOD" and Abraham isn't corrected... the implication is that the "word of the LORD" is indeed "Lord GOD".

Gen 16:1 "Now Sarai, Abram's wife, had borne him no children. And she had an Egyptian maidservant whose name was Hagar."

Gen 16:2 "So Sarai said to Abram, "See now, the LORD has restrained me from bearing children. Please, go in to my maid; perhaps I shall obtain children by her." And Abram heeded the voice of Sarai."

It seems that Hagar was not just an ordinary maidservant. She had a unique position such that if she were to bear Abraham a son, that child would be eligible to inherit his Father's estate...just as if Sarah herself bore the child. This surrogate mother arrangement would've been completed by having Sarah lay unclothed next to Hagar while she was delivering. As soon as the child was delivered, it would be immediately be placed on Sarah's chest just as if she, Sarah herself had delivered the baby. But things didn't work out as Sarah planned.

Gen 16:3 "Then Sarai, Abram's wife, took Hagar her maid, the Egyptian, and gave her to her husband Abram to be his wife, after Abram had dwelt ten years in the land of Canaan." Although it says that Abraham took Hagar as a "wife", we'll see that he really didn't acknowledge or intend to treat her as his wife.

Gen 16:4 "So he went in to Hagar, and she conceived. And when she saw that she had conceived, her mistress became despised in her eyes."

Hagar forgot what her position was as a maidservant and she got a bit prideful and arrogant about the fact that she was able to conceive but Sarah couldn't.

Gen 16:5 "Then Sarai said to Abram, "My wrong be upon you! I gave my maid into your embrace; and when she saw that she had conceived, I became despised in her eyes. The LORD judge between you and me."

So now that Sarah's plan to "help God out" blew up in her face, she blamed Abraham. Commentaries indicate that she blamed him because he agreed to go along with Sarah's plan because he had a fleshly desire to be with the younger woman. Sarah wanted God to confirm that she was right in blaming Abraham. But Abraham throws it right back at Sarah....

Gen 16:6 "So Abram said to Sarai, "Indeed your maid is in your hand; do to her as you please." And when Sarai dealt harshly with her, she fled from her presence."

Hey, why are you coming to me with this? She's YOUR servant. Do whatever you want with her, it's not MY problem.

Gen 16:7 “Now the Angel of the LORD found her by a spring of water in the wilderness, by the spring on the way to Shur.”

Here is another Christophany! The phrase “Angel of the LORD” indicates an appearance of Jesus. At a later date we’ll do an indepth study on the “Angel of the LORD” skip down to verse 10.

Gen 16:10 “Then the Angel of the LORD said to her, ‘I will multiply your descendants exceedingly, so that they shall not be counted for multitude.’ “

This goes back to what God told Abraham in Gen 15:5...and shows that His promise applies to Abraham’s son by Hagar.

Gen 16:11 “And the Angel of the LORD said to her: ‘Behold, you are with child, And you shall bear a son. You shall call his name Ishmael, Because the LORD has heard your affliction.’”

Gen 16:12 “He shall be a wild man; His hand shall be against every man, And every man’s hand against him. And he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren.’ ”

Later on in the Bible we’ll read about the descendants of Ishmael and discover that they are the modern day Arabs. Interesting how their nations surround Israel. And considering how they seem to fight with everyone, especially using terrorism, and the world’s repeated retaliations, it is obvious how this prophecy has come true.

Gen 16:15 “So Hagar bore Abram a son; and Abram named his son, whom Hagar bore, Ishmael.”

Sarah goes on to conceive a son with Abraham, whom they name Isaac. She then instructs Abraham to send Hagar and Ishmael packing. But before he does, the Lord tells Abraham:

Gen 21:13 “Yet I will also make a nation of the son of the bondwoman, because he is your seed.”

God reminds Abraham of His previous promise and that it applies to BOTH of his sons. The remainder of these verses talks about how Hagar and Ishmael were sent away. God delivered them from death in the wilderness and protected them.

There are two more incidental references to Hagar in the Old Testament. But it is in the New Testament and the Book of Galatians where we learn of the deeper significance of Hagar's life. Paul wrote the letter to the Galatians to set the record straight and defend the Gospel of Jesus against the heresy called Galatianism... it was a mixture of grace **plus** the law.

It is in the 4th chapter of this book that Paul offers an example to help explain the deal.

Gal 4:22 "For it is written that Abraham had two sons: the one by a bondwoman, the other by a freewoman."

The bondwoman is obviously Hagar, the freewoman, Sarah.

Gal 4:23 "But he who was of the bondwoman was born according to the flesh, and he of the freewoman through promise,"

Hmm, this gives some support to the notion that Abraham may have had some desire of his own to go along with Sarah's plan and "hook up" with Hagar.

Gal 4:28 "Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are children of promise."

Gal 4:29 "But, as he who was born according to the flesh then persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit, even so it is now."

So Paul indicates that during the time of the 1st Century church Ishmael's descendants were persecuting the nation of Israel. And it is still going on to this very day!

Gal 4:30 "Nevertheless what does the Scripture say? 'Cast out the bondwoman and her son, for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman.'"

This is a reference to Gen 21:10.

Gal 4:31 "So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman but of the free."

By using the story of Abraham, Sarah, and Hagar, Paul illustrated the difference between those who are living in the flesh and in bondage to sin... and those who have accepted Jesus and are free from the power of sin and living in the promise of everlasting life with Him.

Key Character Traits:

- **Obedient**

MEANING OF HER NAME

Hagar means "a stranger", "one that fears", "emigration", "flight".

EXPERIENCE

- **Hagar was an Egyptian**
(She probably came into the service of Abram and Sarai during their time in Egypt)
- **She bore a son Ishmael by Abraham**
- **She was either a believer in the LORD God or at least knew of Him.**
When God appeared to her, she didn't seem to act like it was anything strange. And she called out to God. Perhaps being in Abraham's household she had been exposed to Abraham and Sarah's worship of God.

SPIRITUAL LIFE

- **Obedient** – She was obedient to Sarah. Even going as far as to bear a child for Sarah. And because of her obedience, she was probably very trusted by her masters.

SHORTCOMINGS

After Hagar gave birth to Ishmael, she became prideful, arrogant, and disrespectful. As to what triggered this behavior, we're not really sure. Was it because Abraham began paying more attention to Hagar and Ishmael (thinking that the child was

the one that God promised to him)? Did she pick up on Sarah's insecurity and took advantage of the situation?

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Not much of Hagar's life is known outside of the time surrounding the conception and birth of Ishmael. That may be because her primary role was to give birth to Ishmael.

GLORY TO GOD

Hagar's life was used to demonstrate that God is omnipotent and that He is faithful. She was used to illustrate, by contrast, the freedom that those who accept Jesus have over the bonds of sin and death (through His sacrifice). These are illuminated in the Essential Truths.

ESSENTIAL TRUTH

God is omnipotent. God is all powerful. God promised that Abraham would have a son and that his descendants would be numerous. Even though Abraham, Sarah, and Hagar tried to "help God out" by taking action themselves, God proved to them (and by extension, us) that His perfect will, will be accomplished regardless of what we may do.

God is faithful. God is a promise-keeper. He promised Abraham that his descendants would be as numerous as the stars in the sky and God delivered. Not only did Sarah conceive a son and his descendants were uncountable, but even the descendants of Ishmael were beyond measure too.

Whenever we try to "help God out", it is rooted in selfishness. Whenever we try to orchestrate something, to "help God out", at its core is a very selfish reason. Sarah thought she was helping God out by getting Abraham and Hagar together. But at the root of it, she simply wanted to be in control of the situation. She wanted to be able to say, "see, God said that you'd have a son, and I made it happen." ... all under the guise of "doing God's will".

Abraham may have wanted to do God's will, but the thought of being with a younger, perhaps more attractive woman was appealing to him. By his actions or lack of actions towards Hagar, it is pretty evident that he had no feelings towards Hagar as a wife or as the mother of his son. It seems to have been only a physical thing.

Hagar was perhaps simply being obedient to Sarah's command... but considering how her attitude towards Sarah changed when she conceived Ishmael, it is quite probable that Hagar went along with the plan because she thought that if she was the one instrumental in "providing the solution", by having a son, that her status in the household would grow. She thought that she would gain stature, maybe even greater than that of Sarah...because SHE gave Abraham a son, and Sarah had not (up to that point). *I'll tell ya, I was being a real Hagar two weeks ago... wow. I thought that if I had all the answers that my stature, my position would grow. But the Lord ministered to me through his Word while preparing this study....that it is more important to be loving, than to be right. Praise Jesus!*

Acting outside of God's Will has unpleasant future consequences.

Abraham was not patient nor obedient in waiting for God to fulfill His promise. He took action on his own, for selfish reasons. The result? God still kept His end of the bargain (by making his descendants beyond counting), but He also made his descendants through Ishmael numerous too. Actually, according to Galatians 4:27, the descendants of Ishmael outnumber those of Isaac. The turmoil in the Mid-East that has gone on for thousands of years is a result.

LIFE APPLICATION

We should seek God's will for our lives. We should pray that God's Holy Spirit would reveal to us His will for our lives. As Pastor Al recently taught on Philippians 3:15-19, "It is impossible for a seeking Christian NOT to know the Will of God... but we must first be ready to follow it." Knowing that God is faithful and has the power to deliver (He's omnipotent, all powerful), should give us the confidence that He will indeed reveal His will for us, and help us to do it.

We should be cautious about selfish motives interfering with God's Will for our lives. We need to pray for discernment....to be able to separate what is "us" and what is "Him"... that we should decrease and that Jesus should increase in our lives.

Having received the knowledge of God's will for our lives, we need... TO DO IT! God loves us! He wants the best for us! We need to do whatever He wants us to do... to be obedient, patient, faithful, loving... whatever it takes. We WILL be blessed. Guaranteed. To walk off the path of His will for us, and out from under the shower of His blessings will result in unpleasant future consequences. It's the difference between walking BEHIND a boulder that the Lord is pushing... or in FRONT of it. Where would YOU rather be?!

LEADING LESSON - *What do you think is the leading lesson of this woman's life?*

IMPACT ON YOUR LIFE - *How does the leading lesson impact your life? What specific changes do you need to make to avoid becoming a person of like character?*

FUTURE PLANS - *What specific action do you plan to take to grow in the proper character traits?*

EXPRESS OBEDIENCE - *Pray to God your desire to be obedient in this area of your life*