

Wednesday, January 9

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Genesis 20:1 - 22:24

20 **1** Abraham moved south to the Negev and lived for a while between Kadesh and Shur, and then he moved on to Gerar. While living there as a foreigner, **2** Abraham introduced his wife, Sarah, by saying, "She is my sister." So King Abimelech of Gerar sent for Sarah and had her brought to him at his palace.**3** But that night God came to Abimelech in a dream and told him, "You are a dead man, for that woman you have taken is already married!" **4** But Abimelech had not slept with her yet, so he said, "Lord, will you destroy an innocent nation? **5** Didn't Abraham tell me, 'She is my sister'? And she herself said, 'Yes, he is my brother.' I acted in complete innocence! My hands are clean." **6** In the dream God responded, "Yes, I know you are innocent. That's why I kept you from sinning against me, and why I did not let you touch her. **7** Now return the woman to her husband, and he will pray for you, for he is a prophet. Then you will live. But if you don't return her to him, you can be sure that you and all your people will die." **8** Abimelech got up early the next morning and quickly called all his servants together. When he told them what had happened, his men were terrified. **9** Then Abimelech called for Abraham. "What have you done to us?" he demanded. "What crime have I committed that deserves treatment like this, making me and my kingdom guilty of this great sin? No one should ever do what you have done! **10** Whatever possessed you to do such a thing?" **11** Abraham replied, "I thought, 'This is a godless place. They will want my wife and will kill me to get her.' **12** And she really is my sister, for we both have the same father, but different mothers. And I married her. **13** When God called me to leave my father's home and to travel from place to place, I told her, 'Do me a favor. Wherever we go, tell the people that I am your brother.'"**14** Then Abimelech took some of his sheep and goats, cattle, and male and female servants, and he presented them to Abraham. He also returned his wife, Sarah, to him. **15** Then Abimelech said, "Look over my land and choose any place where you would like to live." **16** And he said to Sarah, "Look, I am giving your 'brother' 1,000 pieces of silver in the presence of all these witnesses. This is to compensate you for any wrong I may have done to you. This will settle any claim against me, and your reputation is cleared." **17** Then Abraham prayed to God, and God healed Abimelech, his wife, and his female servants, so they could have children. **18** For the LORD had caused all the women to be infertile because of what happened with Abraham's wife, Sarah.

21 **1** The LORD kept his word and did for Sarah exactly what he had promised. **2** She became pregnant, and she gave birth to a son for Abraham in his old age. This happened at just the time God had said it would. **3** And Abraham named their son Isaac. **4** Eight days after Isaac was born, Abraham circumcised him as God had commanded. **5** Abraham was 100 years old when Isaac was born. **6** And Sarah declared, "God has brought me laughter. All who hear about this will laugh with me. **7** Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse a baby? Yet I have given Abraham a son in his old age!" **8** When Isaac grew up and was about to be weaned, Abraham prepared a huge feast to celebrate the occasion. **9** But Sarah saw Ishmael—the son of Abraham and her Egyptian servant Hagar—making fun of her son, Isaac. **10** So she turned to Abraham and demanded, "Get rid of that slave woman and her son. He is not going to share the inheritance with my son, Isaac. I won't have it!" **11** This upset Abraham very much because Ishmael was his son. **12** But God told Abraham, "Do not be upset over the boy and your servant. Do whatever Sarah tells you, for Isaac is the son through whom your descendants will be counted. **13** But I will also make a nation of the descendants of Hagar's son because he is your son, too." **14** So Abraham got up early the next morning, prepared food and a container of water, and strapped them on Hagar's shoulders. Then he sent her away with their son, and she wandered aimlessly in the wilderness of Beersheba. **15** When the water was gone, she put the boy in the shade of a bush. **16** Then she went and sat down by herself about a hundred yards away. "I don't want to watch the boy die," she said, as she burst into tears. **17** But God heard the boy crying, and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven, "Hagar, what's wrong? Do not be afraid! God has heard the boy crying as he lies there. **18** Go to him and comfort him, for I will make a great nation from his descendants." **19** Then God opened Hagar's eyes, and she saw a well full of water. She quickly filled her water container and gave the boy a drink. **20** And God was with the boy as he grew up in the wilderness. He became a skillful archer, **21** and he settled in the wilderness of Paran. His mother arranged for him to marry a woman from the land of Egypt. **22** About this time, Abimelech came with Phicol, his army commander, to visit Abraham. "God is obviously with you, helping you in everything you do," Abimelech said. **23** "Swear to me in God's name that you will never deceive me, my children, or any of my descendants. I have been loyal to you, so now swear that you will be loyal to me and to this country where you are living as a foreigner." **24** Abraham replied, "Yes, I swear to it!" **25** Then Abraham complained to Abimelech about a well that Abimelech's servants had taken by force from Abraham's servants. **26** "This is the first I've heard of it," Abimelech answered. "I have no idea who is responsible. You have never complained about this before." **27** Abraham then gave some of his sheep, goats, and cattle to Abimelech, and they made a treaty. **28** But Abraham also took seven additional female lambs and set them off by themselves. **29** Abimelech asked, "Why have you set these seven apart from the others?" **30** Abraham replied, "Please accept

these seven lambs to show your agreement that I dug this well.” **31** Then he named the place Beersheba (which means “well of the oath”), because that was where they had sworn the oath. **32** After making their covenant at Beersheba, Abimelech left with Phicol, the commander of his army, and they returned home to the land of the Philistines. **33** Then Abraham planted a tamarisk tree at Beersheba, and there he worshiped the LORD, the Eternal God. **34** And Abraham lived as a foreigner in Philistine country for a long time.

22 **1** Some time later, God tested Abraham’s faith. “Abraham!” God called. “Yes,” he replied. “Here I am.” **2** “Take your son, your only son—yes, Isaac, whom you love so much—and go to the land of Moriah. Go and sacrifice him as a burnt offering on one of the mountains, which I will show you.” **3** The next morning Abraham got up early. He saddled his donkey and took two of his servants with him, along with his son, Isaac. Then he chopped wood for a fire for a burnt offering and set out for the place God had told him about. **4** On the third day of their journey, Abraham looked up and saw the place in the distance. **5** “Stay here with the donkey,” Abraham told the servants. “The boy and I will travel a little farther. We will worship there, and then we will come right back.” **6** So Abraham placed the wood for the burnt offering on Isaac’s shoulders, while he himself carried the fire and the knife. As the two of them walked on together, **7** Isaac turned to Abraham and said, “Father?” “Yes, my son?” Abraham replied. “We have the fire and the wood,” the boy said, “but where is the sheep for the burnt offering?” **8** “God will provide a sheep for the burnt offering, my son,” Abraham answered. And they both walked on together. **9** When they arrived at the place where God had told him to go, Abraham built an altar and arranged the wood on it. Then he tied his son, Isaac, and laid him on the altar on top of the wood. **10** And Abraham picked up the knife to kill his son as a sacrifice. **11** At that moment the angel of the LORD called to him from heaven, “Abraham! Abraham!” “Yes,” Abraham replied. “Here I am!” **12** “Don’t lay a hand on the boy!” the angel said. “Do not hurt him in any way, for now I know that you truly fear God. You have not withheld from me even your son, your only son.” **13** Then Abraham looked up and saw a ram caught by its horns in a thicket. So he took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering in place of his son. **14** Abraham named the place Yahweh-Yireh (which means “the LORD will provide”). To this day, people still use that name as a proverb: “On the mountain of the LORD it will be provided.” **15** Then the angel of the LORD called again to Abraham from heaven. **16** “This is what the LORD says: Because you have obeyed me and have not withheld even your son, your only son, I swear by my own name that **17** I will certainly bless you. I will multiply your descendants beyond number, like the stars in the sky and the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will conquer the cities of their enemies. **18** And through your descendants all the nations of the earth will be blessed—all because you have obeyed me.” **19** Then they returned to the servants and traveled back to

Beersheba, where Abraham continued to live. **20** Soon after this, Abraham heard that Milcah, his brother Nahor's wife, had borne Nahor eight sons. **21** The oldest was named Uz, the next oldest was Buz, followed by Kemuel (the ancestor of the Arameans), **22** Kesed, Hazo, Pildash, Jidlaph, and Bethuel. **23** (Bethuel became the father of Rebekah.) In addition to these eight sons from Milcah, **24** Nahor had four other children from his concubine Reumah. Their names were Tebah, Gaham, Tahash, and Maacah.

Matthew 7:15 - 29

7 15 "Beware of false prophets who come disguised as harmless sheep but are really vicious wolves. **16** You can identify them by their fruit, that is, by the way they act. Can you pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? **17** A good tree produces good fruit, and a bad tree produces bad fruit. **18** A good tree can't produce bad fruit, and a bad tree can't produce good fruit. **19** So every tree that does not produce good fruit is chopped down and thrown into the fire. **20** Yes, just as you can identify a tree by its fruit, so you can identify people by their actions. **21** "Not everyone who calls out to me, 'Lord! Lord!' will enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Only those who actually do the will of my Father in heaven will enter. **22** On judgment day many will say to me, 'Lord! Lord! We prophesied in your name and cast out demons in your name and performed many miracles in your name.' **23** But I will reply, 'I never knew you. Get away from me, you who break God's laws.' **24** "Anyone who listens to my teaching and follows it is wise, like a person who builds a house on solid rock. **25** Though the rain comes in torrents and the floodwaters rise and the winds beat against that house, it won't collapse because it is built on bedrock. **26** But anyone who hears my teaching and doesn't obey it is foolish, like a person who builds a house on sand. **27** When the rains and floods come and the winds beat against that house, it will collapse with a mighty crash." **28** When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching, **29** for he taught with real authority—quite unlike their teachers of religious law.

Psalms 8:1 - 9

9 1 I will praise you, LORD, with all my heart; I will tell of all the marvelous things you have done. **2** I will be filled with joy because of you. I will sing praises to your name, O Most High. **3** My enemies retreated; they staggered and died when you appeared. **4** For you have judged in my favor; from your throne you have judged with fairness. **5** You have rebuked the nations and destroyed the wicked; you have erased their names forever. **6** The enemy is finished, in endless ruins; the cities you uprooted are now forgotten. **7** But the LORD reigns forever, executing judgment from his throne. **8** He will judge the world with justice and rule the nations with

fairness. **9** The LORD is a shelter for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble. **10** Those who know your name trust in you, for you, O LORD, do not abandon those who search for you. **11** Sing praises to the LORD who reigns in Jerusalem. Tell the world about his unforgettable deeds. **12** For he who avenges murder cares for the helpless. He does not ignore the cries of those who suffer.

Proverbs 2:16-22

2 16 Wisdom will save you from the immoral woman, from the seductive words of the promiscuous woman. **17** She has abandoned her husband and ignores the covenant she made before God. **18** Entering her house leads to death; it is the road to the grave. **19** The man who visits her is doomed. He will never reach the paths of life. **20** Follow the steps of good men instead, and stay on the paths of the righteous. **21** For only the godly will live in the land, and those with integrity will remain in it. **22** But the wicked will be removed from the land, and the treacherous will be uprooted.