

# FOUND, HEARD AND SEEN

Genesis 16:1-16

Sunday October 17<sup>th</sup> 2010 Morning Service

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After blessings and promises of chapter 15 Satan counter attacks, Satan trying to take apart the man & the family that God chose to bless. Satan still does that.

## 1. Satan At Work: Two Questions

### 1. What was wrong?

Sarai suggests Abram has a child with her servant girl Hagar as wife v2 'perhaps I can build a family through her'. How can we be sure that was wrong? 3 reasons we know this was a departure from God's Word & will.

**1) Results:** result was a sequence of evils not blessings. Instead of a lovely fulfilment of God's promise, we end up v7 with a mess: damaged relationships & a vulnerable woman alone in the desert. When we depart from God's way we create a mess.

**2) Teaching:** narrative in the Bible comes in context of what God has already said. This was against the principles of marriage God laid down in Gen 2:24 'a man will leave his father & mother & be united (hold fast) to his wife & they will become one flesh'. Marriage is the heterosexual union between one man & one woman for life. The first to take two wives is the polygamist & murderer Lament in 4:19. The values of ungodly world are shaping the behaviour of a godly man.

**3) Fulfilment** of the promise of God is that indeed Sarai & Abram will have a child 17:16. When you see how God worked out his plans through Isaac, you see that Gen 16 was a diversion from the path of obedience to God.

### 2. What went wrong?

What makes us leave God's way?

**1) Sarai.** We need be understanding of Sarai rather just stand in judgement over her, but also need be very clear how deeply she was misled, in ways we can be too.

**i] powerful emotions:** very distressed woman: childlessness brings enormous pain. Also she had promises of God that Abram would have a child. She is driven by powerful emotions. But men & women of faith must chose to live by Word of God not by their emotions. That was Jesus' choice in Gethsemane 'not my will but

yours be done'. Fear, loneliness, anger, desperation all are used by Satan as ways of leading us to disobey God.

**ii] Long delay:** After ten years there was no sign of the promised heir. Delay is very testing. But men & women of faith must trust God by submitting to his timing.

**iii] Pressure of society:** This plan Abram should take Sarai's servant as a wife to create a family for Sarai, was seen as an acceptable practice right across then ancient east. We are very influenced by values around us. In our society sexual relations outside marriage are almost seen as normal. We don't favour polygamy but divorce & remarriage redefines what marriage is about & broken marriages leave a swathe of destruction in our nation. Also there is huge pressure to accept homosexual relationships as marriage. But men & women of faith say 'No' to this world's values because they say 'Yes' to God's Word.

**2) Abram.** God intended that husband should be head and take responsibility: but here Abram here made 2 crucial choices, both to take the easy route: the classic male weakness. Firstly Abram goes with the tide of his wife's distress: he needed to be sympathetic to his wife's distress. but he also capitulates to his wife's distress v2 'Abram agreed to what Sarai said'. He ends up following his wife rather than his God. Having failed to warn Sarai, now Abram washes his hands of responsibility: v6 'Your servant is in your hands. Do with her whatever you think best'. He'll walk away & leave it to the women. Classic male cop out. Satan loves it. Men failing in families & church to be men and to give a lead in obedience to God.

**3) Hagar:** was in this situation because of the decisions of others: but her ungodly response made for part of problem: v4. In our lives sinful reactions, pride, unkindness, folly compound other evils and lead us to turn away from God's way for us.

## 2. God At Work: Three Assurances

When God intervenes v.7 he goes to least likely person, Hagar, the servant and foreigner, sitting in the desert near a spring beside the road to Shur, in the north of Sinai Peninsula on way to Egypt. In her mess Hagar receives a wonderful disclosure of God's character.

**1. God Found her:** v7 Our knowledge of God is because he comes to where we are. He came to speak to her, v8 & v14. God reveals himself by his words. Why we have an open Bible because this is how we encounter God today. 'The angel of the LORD', who we find v13 is a manifestation of the LORD, speaks in 3 ways.

**1) Questions** v8 God invites her to speak back to him.

**2) Commands:** not just come to console: v9 'Go back to your mistress & submit to her'. Not what she wanted to hear. When God speaks he commands: often not comfortable. : go back to your husband, to your wife, to your obligations. God puts great value on submission.

**3) Encourages:** with promises, v10 descendants too numerous to count.

**2. God Heard her.** Ishmael: means 'God hears'. Explained v11. Name memorialises that God hears. Her misery itself was heard by God. God is aware of each of us: he hears anguish. Part of her anguish were fears

for her child's future, so God tells her he will be a 'wild donkey of a man', not an insult, but sort of complement. But with no note of blessing brought through him, rather hostility brought through him.

**3) God Saw her** Hagar gives a name to God that is commemorated in name of the well. He is the **God who sees us**: when no one else does, when we are in despair.

**God who cares for us**: 'to see' has connotations of caring for, like 'look after' in English.

**God who is seen**: she has a revelation of the living God. Bible speaks of God who sees us as One who will allow us to see him: God reveals himself in person, above all in Jesus. 'The Word became flesh & we have seen his glory', John 1. In 1 John 1 John writes 'That which was from the beginning which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at & our hands have touched- this we proclaim to you concerning the Word of life'. Great promise of future is that every eye will see him & believers will see him as he is & be like him. This God brings hope to us in all the mess & distress of our world.

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