

MOTHER'S DAY SERMON
"Sarah: Mother of a Nation"
Genesis 17:16

May 11, 1986

INTRODUCTION

1. Sarah is first mentioned in the Bible in connection with the generations of Shem (Gen. 11:30 cf. v. 10).
2. While much is heard about Abraham, her husband, it must be understood that Sarah shared his obedience (Gen. 12:4, 5), his lineage (Gen. 20:12), and all the wanderings, defections, and experiences until her death at 127 years of age (Gen. 23:1).
3. It was not easy for Sarah to leave Ur of the Chaldees (Gen. 12:1). That was a place of philosophy, astronomy, and developed culture. She left all to travel with Abraham (cf. John 24:2).
4. Scripture describes Sarah in glowing terms. She was apparently coveted for the harems of various rulers of the day. The text states she was fair, very fair, and fair to look upon (Gen. 12:11, 14). Her beauty was obvious. Indeed, "Sarai" means "my princess," hence she a. held a high social standing and b. stood in an endearing relationship to her husband.
5. Sarai had her name changed to Sarah thus adding the suffix for Jehovah. It affirmed the covenant between God and Abraham (Gen. 12:1-3 cf. 17:6-21), a covenant whose sign was circumcision of the flesh. This related Sarah to the promises of Messiah, indeed, to Messiah Himself.
6. The life of Sarah included shortcomings and at times the guilt of unbelief, but God saw her as a woman of faith (Heb. 11:11, 13). Her experiences in the life of faith illustrate various kinds of relationships which a soul can have with God--all of Sarah's may be summarized under the word "laughter."

1. LAUGH OF UNBELIEF

a. By Abraham Gen. 17:15-21

Following the great expression of the covenant and the sign of circumcision, God Himself spoke to Abraham about a son to be born to him and Sarah. He would be covenant related (Gen. 17:19-21). The incongruity of such a birth made Abraham laugh (Gen. 17:17). Isaac would be the name of the son to come to always remind Abraham of his unbelief. Isaac means "laugh."

b. By Sarah Gen. 18:9-15

A theophany is an appearance of God (cf. a Christophany which is a preincarnate appearance of Christ).

Adam and Enoch experienced theophanies (Gen. 3:8; 5:24). Here, Sarah prepared a meal for a theophany. This is something real (Gen. 18:6-8). It is recorded in this incident that Sarah laughed (Gen. 18:12). The same incongruity which made Abraham laugh caused Sarah to do the same.

NOTE: The laugh of Abraham and Sarah were not those of the mockers and intellectuals today. They just could not see how it could be done.

2. LAUGH OF FAITH Hebrews 11:8-19

a. Recorded

Scripture carefully reports that both Abraham and Sarah believed God. That was a characteristic for them. Both laughed "in the heart" (Gen. 17:17; 18:12) but God knew this (Gen. 18:13). God knows the heart (Psa. 66:18; Psa. 139:1-6). God repeated His promise about Isaac's coming. Sarah must have believed (cf. Gen. 15:4; 17:19; 18:10), else Hebrews 11 would be difficult to understand.

b. Reminded

To Abraham assurance was given that Isaac would be born (Gen. 17:19-21). To Sarah a question is posed-- is anything too hard for the Lord (Gen. 18:14)? This inability of God to fail has made men of faith to do great things, cf. Noah (ark), Moses (exodus), David (Goliath). Hebrews records such events (11:33-35, 38).

3. LAUGH OF JOY Genesis 21:1-8

Abraham and Sarah disobeyed God and substituted Hagar to gain a child (11:30; 16:1, 3). God's promise never changed. When the promised child came, there was "laughter" (Gen. 21:6). Here was the progenitor of Messiah, if not Messiah Himself (Gen. 3:15). The great test of Genesis 22 was also one for Sarah, Isaac's mother. She suffered untold agony, but did not stand in the way. His return with Abraham was a vindication of God's promise. A legend says Sarah was dying of a broken heart when Isaac returned.

CONCLUSION

Isaac was laughter to Sarah and Abraham. Jesus Christ is rejoicing and singing to those who believe Him. Abraham is the father of the faithful, but Sarah is the mother of a spiritual nation of rejoicing saints. Amen.