

Genesis

Chapter 21:22-34

✠ **Gen 21:22-34** ²² *And it came to pass at that time that Abimelech and Phichol, the commander of his army, spoke to Abraham, saying, "God is with you in all that you do. ²³ "Now therefore, swear to me by God that you will not deal falsely with me, with my offspring, or with my posterity; but that according to the kindness that I have done to you, you will do to me and to the land in which you have dwelt." ²⁴ And Abraham said, "I will swear."*

²⁵ *Then Abraham rebuked Abimelech because of a well of water which Abimelech's servants had seized. ²⁶ And Abimelech said, "I do not know who has done this thing; you did not tell me, nor had I heard of it until today." ²⁷ So Abraham took sheep and oxen and gave them to Abimelech, and the two of them made a covenant. ²⁸ And Abraham set seven ewe lambs of the flock by themselves. ²⁹ Then Abimelech asked Abraham, "What is the meaning of these seven ewe lambs which you have set by themselves?" ³⁰ And he said, "You will take these seven ewe lambs from my hand, that they may be my witness that I have dug this well." ³¹ Therefore he called that place Beersheba, because the two of them swore an oath there. ³² Thus they made a covenant at Beersheba. So Abimelech rose with Phichol, the commander of his army, and they returned to the land of the Philistines. ³³ Then Abraham planted a tamarisk tree in Beersheba, and there called on the name of the LORD, the Everlasting God. ³⁴ And Abraham stayed in the land of the Philistines many days.*

The last time we read about Abimelech was in chapter 20. Remember that this was where Abraham had lied and said that Sarah was his sister, which we learned was a half-truth because Sarah was Abraham's half sister.

God also appeared to Abimelech in a dream telling him that Sarah was a married woman and Abimelech feared the Lord and obeyed Him.

At the end of chapter 20 Abraham prayed for Abimelech.

† **Gen 20:17-18** ¹⁷ *So Abraham prayed to God; and God healed Abimelech, his wife, and his female servants. Then they bore children; ¹⁸ for the LORD had closed up all the wombs of the house of Abimelech because of Sarah, Abraham's wife.*

So here we are again with Abraham and Abimelech, with Abimelech seeing that the Lord was with Abraham, and because Abimelech knew that God was with Abraham, he wanted to be on Abraham's good side. In fact Abimelech knew how much that the Lord was with Abraham that he made him swear by God that Abraham would not come against him, his family or any of his riches.

As I read this I have to think of what an awesome thing it is for someone to see God in our lives.

How do people view your God?

Do they see Him like Abimelech saw Abraham's God? All-powerful and mighty, knowing that if you mess with Abraham you are messing with one of God's children? Or in other terms, do people know if they mess with you they are messing with one of God's children? Maybe they do, but it's possible they're not seeing the God of Abraham in your life.

What kind of God do people see in your life? Is He weak, never providing? Do you have to look to the world because your god will not take care of you, or at least that is the appearance you give?

When troubles come, do you run to the world for answers or to God?

Do you glorify God with what you have, or do you squander it all for yourself?

Do people see you reading the paper or a book or magazines and never reading the bible?

Are you afraid to pray in a restaurant or in front of your coworkers before you eat?

Do your kids see this, with mom and/or dad praying at the dinner table at home when it's only the family, but when someone comes over, or your at a restaurant, do you dig in without acknowledging God to others?

Do you brag on yourself and your accomplishments or do you brag on what God has done in your life?

I ask again, what God or god are people seeing in your life. I know this is a tough question and it may even want you to put this study down, because it hits right at home. To be honest I wanted to just breeze through the rest of this chapter so we can get into chapter 22 with God asking Abraham to sacrifice his son. But I am thankful that God has given this to me to share with you, and to cause me to look at myself, and the God I am portraying to others.

Maybe you are unsure of the God/god you are showing to others, how do you know? Look at verse 22 again:

✠ 22 And it came to pass at that time that Abimelech and Phichol, the commander of his army, spoke to Abraham, saying, "God is with you in all that you do."

GOD is with you in all that you do.

God here in the Hebrew is: '**elohiym el-o-heem**'

Which is the plural form of God the same one used in Genesis 1:1.

Abimelech was acknowledging that Abraham's God was the only true God, the God who created heaven and earth. This was not a passing name of the world's god, which there are many of.

✠ 1 Cor 8:4-6 ⁴ Therefore concerning the eating of things offered to idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is no other God but

one. ⁵ For even if there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth (as there are many gods and many lords), ⁶ yet for us there is one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we for Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, through whom are all things, and through whom we live.

The world uses God's name in vain, damning Him, and cursing Him like His name is just another curse word in their vocabulary.

So do people curse God in front of you, and if they do, do they apologize for it? They can ask for our forgiveness for using our God's name in vain in front of us, but they really need to seek God's forgiveness. This is one way you know if people see God in your life. Another way is when they have problems; do they ask you to pray for them or someone in their family? Think of Christmas and how it's interesting to see the world acknowledge God and His Son Jesus. But do they really know Him or do they use it as an excuse to get things, or even have a day or two off from work?

In a bakery an order came in for a small cake to be done which simply read "Happy Birthday Jesus". The cake decorator called all the workers in the bakery to see the cake, some thought it was cute or even a good idea, where others thought it was just stupid or they didn't understand it. Yes the world sees Jesus during Christmas, but they just see Him as a baby in a manger, not knowing who He really is.

I remember a story of someone going into a jewelry store and wanting to buy a cross, the girl behind the counter asked, "Do you want one with or without a little man on it?" That's the way the world sees Christmas and Easter, just a little man on a piece of jewelry or a little baby. Just because it's not Christmas doesn't mean you can't share the true meaning of Christmas or Easter with others. For us as Christians, it's something we celebrate everyday, not just once a year.

Sometimes people will make fun of you because you are a Christian, some will even put you down or even hate you because of your belief in Jesus. Jesus said that this would be a normal thing for Christians:

† **John 15:20-21** ²⁰ *"Remember the word that I said to you, 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. If they kept My word, they will keep yours also. ²¹ 'But all these things they will do to you for My name's sake, because they do not know Him who sent Me.*

But don't let it get you down or discourage you:

† **Matt 5:11-12** ¹¹ *"Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. ¹² 'Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.*

If they did the same thing to Jesus and the prophets, you're in good company!

So afterwards when Abraham agreed to be kind to Abimelech a confrontation came up again between Abraham and Abimelech's men. But Abimelech swore that he knew nothing about this, and instead of Abraham getting upset about it and taking back his promise, he made a covenant with Abimelech.

✠ *27 So Abraham took sheep and oxen and gave them to Abimelech, and the two of them made a covenant.*

We notice that Abraham didn't go running around saying how he made a covenant with Abimelech and now he treated him like this. No, but rather Abraham followed Jesus' teaching.

✠ **Matt 18:15** *Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother.*

If Abraham didn't confront Abimelech with this problem, he never would have known that Abimelech was innocent of this. Don't be quick to judge others without confronting them. Read Jesus' words again in Matthew:

✠ **Matt 18:15** *Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother.*

So many times we create enemies because we don't talk to someone first. We are so quick to judge and condemn others. It's like we are the judge and the jury, finding them guilty without a trial.

Today if you have something against someone, stop what you are doing and talk to them about it. We see with Abraham and Abimelech, there was a healing, which if there was no communication at all the results could have been war. And if there is no communication between you and the one you are angry with, the result is, you now have an enemy, and it could be with someone who is innocent!

The meaning of the offering also confused Abimelech.

✠ *29 Then Abimelech asked Abraham, "What is the meaning of these seven ewe lambs which you have set by themselves?" 30 And he said, "You will take these seven ewe lambs from my hand, that they may be my witness that I have dug this well."*

So Abraham explained to him the meaning:

✠ *30 And he said, "You will take these seven ewe lambs from my hand, that they may be my witness that I have dug this well." 31 Therefore he called that place Beersheba, because the two of them swore an oath there.*

Just as Abraham made a covenant with Abimelech claiming his possession, so did God do the same for us with His promise of eternal life, by offering the Lamb in exchange for our sins, and the Lamb of God is Jesus. And through the acceptance of this offering of the Lamb we become God's property!

Finally:

✠ ³³ Then Abraham planted a tamarisk tree in Beersheba, and there called on the name of the LORD, the Everlasting God. ³⁴ And Abraham stayed in the land of the Philistines many days.

Once again Abraham offers sacrifices to the Lord, acknowledging God for who He is, and knowing that God has been his provider, and help in time of need.

To close this weeks study, I just want you to remember that God is your provider and help in time of need also. Just because this happened 4000 years ago, doesn't mean that God can not, or will not do the same for you too. God is never changing; He's just the same in Abraham's time as He is today.

Maybe you don't see God as clearly as we see Him in Abraham's life in the book of Genesis. Or maybe you are just looking for the wrong thing. If you have read of the life of Joseph at the end of Genesis you will see all that he went through. And because we know the end of the story, we encourage Joseph to continue on as we are reading, because we know that God will work things out for his benefit. If you haven't read his story I would encourage you to read ahead starting in Genesis chapter 37.

But you know what, you may be a Joseph today, with things just seeming to be going wrong no matter which way you turn. I don't know the end of your story, but God does, and if God does, then you know you are in good hands just as Joseph was!