God keeps His promises in all circumstances (Genesis 21)

In this chapter God reveals Himself as a keeper of promises, not just in the case of an heir, but in three circumstances in the life of Abraham.

I. **In the joyous birth of Isaac it was clear that God was keeping His promises.**
The brevity of the account of Isaac's birth allows the dual emphasis to be seen.
1. God acted as He had promised (vv 1-2): Abraham would have a son. Sarah would be the mother. It would occur at this time. Abraham's responsive is instructive.
– He gave his son the name Isaac, "laughter", reminding them of their earlier doubt, their joy, and God's faithfulness.
– He obeyed God by giving the name Isaac (cf. Gen 17:18-19) and by circumcising Isaac (cf. Gen 17:12-13).
It is good to be reminded of God's faithfulness, of the joy which He brings and of our need. We should also respond in obedience, not forgetting commitments which we have made or responsibilities which God has given.
2. God fulfills His promises even when it may seem humanly impossible to do so, as was the miraculous nature of Isaac' birth. Three times the advance age of Abraham is mentioned (vv 2, 5, 7).

II. ***Despite the sorrow of Ishmael's expulsion God was still keeping His promises.***
Though the narrative moves smoothly, the weaning of Isaac may have been 3 or more years later. But this was an occasion colored with sorrow rather than joy.
1. The birth of Isaac removed Ishmael from the place of being the primary heir of Abraham. Ishmael was the son of a slave woman, Hagar. Isaac was the promised heir by Abraham's wife, Sarah. Sarah interpreted Ishmael's mocking of Isaac as a sign that bad times would be coming (cf. Gal 4:29). Though it distressed Abraham to send Ishmael away, he obeyed God and did as Sarah had requested. Never-the-less God promised that he would make a nation of Ishmael as well.
2. Either because of inadequate provisions or careless wandering, Ishmael and Hagar eventually ran out of water and appeared to be facing death. But God kept His promise and provided water for them. He promised this time to Hagar that He would make Ishmael into a great nation and He stayed with him as he grew up (v 20).
3. God's promises here to Abraham and Hagar fit into a larger context of God's promises.
– God had promised Hagar when many descendants (Gen 16:10).
– God blessed Ishmael because he was Abraham's son (21:13).
– God promised that Abraham would be the father of many nations (17:4-6).

Even in the midst of a very tragic and sorrowful event we can see God fulfilling His promises to Abraham. Though the circumstance can be traced back to Abraham's failure, God was still faithful. He kept His promises.

III. ***Even in Abraham's influence on his neighbors we see God keeping His promises.***
God had promised Abraham, that he would make Abraham a blessing. He would bless those who bless him, and curse those who curse him (Gen 12:2-3) which God does in relation to Abraham's neighbors.
1. The relation between Abraham and Abimelech did not get off to a good start (Gen 20). Abraham deceived Abimelech, but Abimelech was punished and had to ask Abraham to pray for him. In parting Abimelech generously gave Abraham much.
2. Abimelech appears to have learned the promise to Abraham of blessing and cursing. He saw that God was with Abraham in everything. Even when Abraham deceived, Abimelech knew it was senseless to oppose him. He wanted the same kindness or blessing shown to him as he had shown.
3. Before official conclusion of the treaty Abraham wanted to resolve some contention concerning a well, an extremely important issue in that arid country. Abraham claimed that Abimelech's servants had seized a well which Abraham had dug. Abimelech's explanation seems to have satisfied Abraham, so they conclude the treaty with the typical gift of sheep and cattle. But Abraham adds 7 ewe lambs to make sure that Abimelech acknowledges his water rights. In Abimelech's agreement God's promises were being fulfilled. God was blessing Abraham. Abraham was a tool for God to bless or curse others.
4. Once Abimelech and his commander left, Abraham planted a tree indicating his intent to stay a long time and his sense of security. He worshiped God and did remain a long time. It was right to thank God and to praise God as God was keeping His promises to Abraham.

At the end of the chapter a new title for the Lord is introduced. He is the Eternal God. God can keep His promises <u>forever</u> because He is the Eternal God. The promises made to Abraham went far beyond his lifetime – many nations, innumerable descendants, possession of the land, and blessings to all the nations. This could only be fulfilled if God were an Eternal God. Abraham welcomed from a distance the promises which God had made. He believed God, he trusted God, because the Lord is the Eternal God. Cf. Hebrews 11:11-13.

The greatness and goodness of God is our guarantee of His promises. He cannot lie, so He will purpose to keep His promises. He is great, so He is able to keep His promises. God keeps His promises when it means our joy. God is still keeping His promises even when we are facing sorrow and tragic circumstances. God keeps His promises in all of life's circumstances.

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