

Gleanings from the Pentateuch

Fulfilling an "Impossible" Promise
(Genesis 21)

An "Impossible" Promise

1. Sarah was barren from the beginning (Genesis 11:30)
2. God refused the solution of a legal heir named Eliezer (Genesis 15:4)
3. God rejected the solution of Ishmael, Abraham's son through Hagar (Genesis 17:15-19)

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4. God waited until Abraham and Sarah were old, beyond childbearing years (Genesis 18:11)
5. Twice God preserved Sarah's marriage to Abraham (Genesis 12 & 20)
6. Sarah conceived and gave birth by God's direct intervention (Genesis 21)

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7. The son of the promise was named Isaac ("laughter") (Genesis 21:3-7)
 - continual reminder that what was humanly impossible, God accomplished

AND

 - the fulfillment of this promise brought great joy ("laughter")

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Q: Why is God intent on making this promise humanly impossible?

A: He aims to show that nothing is too difficult for the Lord

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Principle #1 (broad)

➤ in all He does, God's chief purpose is to magnify Himself

- by causing us to depend on Him to do what is humanly impossible
- by nullifying all human effort, initiative, achievement, and boasting

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Principle #1 (broad)

➤ in all He does, God’s chief purpose is to magnify Himself

(1) Is this morally upright of God?

- As God, it would be unrighteous of God not to value His glory supremely
- God is the only being of whom self-exaltation is the highest virtue

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Principle #1 (broad)

➤ in all He does, God’s chief purpose is to magnify Himself

(2) Is this loving of God?

- Our greatest good/happiness is being satisfied in God forever
- the most loving thing God can do for us is to magnify Himself to us

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Principle #2 (specific)

➤ Sovereign grace, not human initiative, brings about children of promise

Romans 9:6-9

- “*Children of the flesh*” (Ishmael-like) – the product of ordinary human resources
- “*Children of the promise*” (Isaac-like) – the product of God’s sovereign power/grace

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Conclusion:

- The birth of Isaac is a picture of how the true “seed of Abraham” comes into being
- If you are a child of God, it is by His sovereign power and grace alone