

## **Genesis 20 – Abraham and Abimelech**

The time of the promise had nearly come. God had said there would be one more year (18:10) – and then Isaac, the promised child, the beginning of the mighty nation, would come. But there was one more thing to happen first – one more challenge to the promises and to God's plans.

### **1. Introducing Abraham and Abimelech (v1-2)**

We do not read any more about Lot. His final compromises take him off the pages of Scripture and God's purposes. Abraham's faith and obedience were now leading him, after 25 years, to receive God's promises. Yet, Abraham was far from perfect. Only one man in the Bible is perfect and holy – and it is not this one! Here, trouble came from the Philistines – before it came from the Egyptians, Babylonians and Canaanites. God was showing the Israelites, reading later, where to expect their trouble from. We also should know where challenges will come to those who follow Christ. Abraham had honoured God in many things for many years. But here, he repeats the sin of 12:10-20. He again was weak and tried to rely on his own plans to protect himself – and this time he knew Sarah had been promised the child, soon. We should not be surprised to find weakness in great men – and old temptations returning to challenge us even after many years. We should never think that we have finally defeated sin; we must always be ready. Again, Abraham's plan did not work; his wife was taken away from him. Where are you trusting your own clever ideas instead of walking in the light and trusting God?

### **2. The king's heart is in God's hands (v3-8)**

Sarah was in danger – and so was the promise. How would Abraham have a child through her, if she was taken to be Abimelech's? But the king's heart is in God's hands (Proverbs 21:1). God always has a way. He came in a dream. See what God says about adultery (v3) – a sin worthy of death. Abimelech responded. He showed that he feared God. Abimelech knew that God ruled and was righteous, and that adultery would be wicked. All people have an awareness of God; when trouble and tragedy come, we see it. God told Abimelech what to do. God had held back Abimelech from sinning. God is always in complete control, even over kings. We can have no secrets from him. Yet this God, who can do all things, decided only to act when Abraham prayed (v7). This is his way. Therefore, we should pray so much! Abimelech obeyed immediately. When we become aware of some sin or wrong, we should put it right immediately; we can no longer be innocent once we know the truth.

### **3. God restores what Abraham had lost (v9-18)**

If you were Abimelech, what would you say? He rebuked Abraham, but with respect. He knew that adultery was a great sin; and Abraham had put him in danger of it. But his words were also respectful – he allowed Abraham his dignity. We should deal both rightly and gently with those who are going wrong. Abraham's “apology” was poor; he says little that shows he was truly sorry for his error and lack of faith. Even if Sarah was truly a relative, his lack of care for her, his wife and the mother of the promised one, was terrible. Abimelech rebuked Sarah too, and sent them out – with many blessings. Abraham never needed to fear this good man. Often our fears are very mistaken. We should simply trust God and it will be better than we knew! Abraham prayed for Abimelech, and God healed his household. How good to know, that though we are so weak and stumble many times, that God still kindly hears and answers his peoples' prayers; not because we are good, but because of his dear Son, Jesus Christ.