

Sarai’s Name is Changed

I. SARAI IS GIVEN A NEW NAME

The fulfillment of God’s promise [Gen 15:4], *"This man shall not be your heir; your own son shall be your heir,"* is going to exceed Abraham’s expectations. True, he already does have a son, Ishmael, by the slave-girl Hagar according to the customs of the time.

But it is not through this son that God is going to keep his promise, but through a son to be born of Sarah, and whose birth will clearly reveal the power of God.

Sarah, Abraham’s wife, is also going to have a direct involvement in the way the promise is fulfilled. And so she too, like Abraham, is going to be given a new name to show the new status or identity she is given by sharing directly in God’s plan through her motherhood.

“Sarah” means something like "queen mother" or "princess" - in other words, a suggestion of royalty. From her descendants would come King David, in whom this part of the covenant ("kings of peoples shall come from her") was fulfilled.

When David sat on Israel's royal throne (c. 1010-970 B.C.), God made a covenant with him that someone from his line would always sit on the throne of Israel (see 2 Sam. 7).

Jesus, born of the house of David, would be that King, reigning forever over the New Israel, the Church.

Read: Genesis 17:15-22

[15] And God said to Abraham, "As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name.

[16] I will bless her, and moreover I will give you a son by her; I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of peoples shall come from her."

[17] Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed, and said to himself, "Shall a child be born to a man who is a hundred years old? Shall Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear a child?"

[18] And Abraham said to God, "O that Ishmael might live in thy sight!"

[19] God said, "No, but Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac. I will establish my covenant with him as an everlasting

covenant for his descendants after him.

[20] As for Ishmael, I have heard you; behold, I will bless him and make him fruitful and multiply him exceedingly; he shall be the father of twelve princes, and I will make him a great nation.

[21] But I will establish my covenant with Isaac, whom Sarah shall bear to you at this season next year."

[22] When he had finished talking with him, God went up from Abraham.

A. Abraham Laughs

When Abraham hears that Sarah is going to bear a son, he falls down laughing. His laughter conveys the astonishment the announcement causes – it seems unbelievable.

Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed, and said to himself, "Shall a child be born to a man who is a hundred years old? Shall Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear a child?"

Is it the laughter of amusement or of incredulity? It is hard to tell. Perhaps it is a mixture of both. The idea of Abraham and Sarah having a child in their advancing years is so outrageously wonderful to him that it is laughable. Laughter is also connected with the name of the child to be born – Isaac.

This kind of joy is something the apostles experience when Jesus appeared in their midst after the Resurrection and they "did not believe for joy" (see Luke 24:36-41). It seems just too good to be true.

Notice that Abraham makes his comments to himself, not God. Perhaps he is trying to talk himself into believing what God has just promised. He then asks God to make Ishmael his heir. Abraham keeps on thinking in terms of the son he already has, which possibly suggests a certain ambivalence about it all.

The picture of Abraham on the floor, laughing at the thought of fathering a child with Sarah, is not easy to evaluate. Is it a picture of delightful intimacy between God and Abraham? Or is it an expression of irreverence?

What does it mean that God says the son to be born shall be called "Isaac," which means "he laughed"? Abraham will have a perpetual reminder that what he thought was too good to be true actually happened. God, Who works through reversal, will have the last "laugh."

B. Abraham Pleads that Ishmael be his Heir

Why do you suppose Abraham pleads with God to let Ishmael be his heir?

And Abraham said to God, "O that Ishmael might live in thy sight!"

Ishmael, Abraham's only son, is thirteen years old. Surely Abraham loved him very much. Deep bonds of affection have developed between them. It isn't too surprising that Abraham longs for this beloved child to be the one through whom God works.

This is not necessarily a lack of faith on Abraham's part. It may simply be the expression of his attachment to his son, which is a natural human instinct.

One of the consequences of Abraham's lapse with Hagar is that he will have to suffer the agony of giving up his hope that the covenant promise will be fulfilled through Ishmael.

- This will be difficult. It represents the kind of temporal suffering we introduce into our lives by departing from God's plan.

C. Intercessory Prayer

This is the first (but not the last) time that Abraham speaks to God on behalf of someone else - this is intercessory prayer.

God responds generously to his pleas for Ishmael, although not granting exactly what he requested. It is clear, however, that God's love for Abraham is the basis on which He acts.

Notice the blessing God grants to Ishmael on account of Abraham's plea (v. 20). What does this suggest about the power of Abraham's prayers?

As for Ishmael, I have heard you; behold, I will bless him and make him fruitful and multiply him exceedingly; he shall be the father of twelve princes, and I will make him a great nation.

This begins a pattern in Scripture, which was continued in the leaders of Israel whom God called to do His work.

It culminated in Jesus, Who prayed for sinners as He hung on the Cross. Intercession is embedded in the Lord's Prayer, since it is not a prayer for "me" but for "us." The Church, Christ's Body on earth, prays for the whole world at every Mass, as she makes an offering in thanksgiving to God for His great mercy and marvellous promises.

Because this offering is joined to the perfect offering Jesus made on Calvary, we know that it is accompanied by the High Priestly prayer of Jesus, at the right hand of God, and that it is efficacious. Later on we will see more of Abraham as an intercessor.

Finally, God tells Abraham when to expect the birth of his son.

II. CIRCUMCISION

Read: Genesis 17:23-27

[23] Then Abraham took Ishmael his son and all the slaves born in his house or bought with his money, every male among the men of Abraham's house, and he circumcised the flesh of their foreskins that very day, as God had said to him.

[24] Abraham was ninety-nine years old when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin.

[25] And Ishmael his son was thirteen years old when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin.

[26] That very day Abraham and his son Ishmael were circumcised;

[27] and all the men of his house, those born in the house and those bought with money from a foreigner, were circumcised with him

D. Abraham Obeys God

Imagine Abraham's possible line of thought - Sarah will give birth in another year, but circumcision will knock him out of commission for awhile. He might have been tempted to take care of the work with Sarah first, while he was in good shape, and then circumcise himself.

His prompt obedience is a strong sign of his desire to please God, no matter what his misgivings might have been.

E. Formal Acceptance of the Covenant

Circumcision represents Abraham's formal acceptance of the covenant God has made with him. He believes that God will keep His magnificent promise of making his name great, with kings coming from him in a royal dynasty.

He agrees to walk before God and be blameless - to live as God wants him to live. He obeys God's command to be circumcised, accepting the blood, pain, suffering, and temporary impotence it will cause, entering into the paradox of "death" leading to life.

This scene is a paradigm [model] of how men enter the New Covenant, mediated by Jesus Christ.

- We believe in the promises of God offered to us through Christ;
- we agree to be God's people through the gift of His grace, walking blamelessly before Him, turning away from sin;
- we obey the call of Christ to be baptized, following Him into death that we may follow Him into life.

III. REFLECTIONS ON ABRAHAM'S LIFE

Now that we have become well acquainted with Abraham, it will be interesting for us to think through some more of St. Paul's reflections on him, recorded in his letter to the Romans. In Rom. 4:16-25, he writes:

...Abraham...is the father of us all, as it is written, "I have made you the father of many nations" - in the presence of the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist. In hope he believed against hope, that he should become the father of many nations; as he had been told, "So shall your descendants be."

He did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body, which was as good as dead because he was about a hundred years old, or when he considered the barrenness of Sarah's womb. No distrust made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised.

Do you find anything curious about St. Paul's commentary on the life of Abraham?

- Would we have described him as a man who "did not weaken in faith"?
- Does he appear to be one about whom it could be said that "No distrust made him waver concerning the promise of God?"
- What does St. Paul mean? Was he reading the same story we are?

St. Paul knew all the details of Abraham's life; what he observed of the up's and down's in it must not have counted, in his opinion, as episodes of broken faith. Instead, they must have looked like occasions when Abraham "grew strong" in his faith (v. 20).

St. Paul sees faith as a way of life, not a single act. Faith grows and strengthens; it is tested and purified. It learns from mistakes; it goes forward rather than backwards. In fact, he described his own life of faith that way, in Phil. 3:12-14:

Not that I ... am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own.

Brethren, I do not consider that I have made it my own; but one thing I do, forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

Although he was surely aware of the times in Abraham's life when he could and should have behaved better than he did, St. Paul does not see Abraham turning away from trusting God for His promises. He did not pack his bags and go back to Haran. As much as he loved Ishmael, he did not bolt with him to start his own nation.

In the ultimate test of Abraham's faith yet, he circumcised himself, even though God had said that the birth of his son through Sarah was quite near. At that point, when he willingly disabled the part of his body absolutely necessary for the promise of God to come true, he acted precisely as St. Paul describes it: *"In hope he believed against hope, that he should become the father of many nations"* (v. 18).

- The life of faith does not mean a life without failure.

Think of Jesus' prediction of Peter's denial. *"I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to me, strengthen your brethren"* (Luke 22:32).

Peter certainly failed to do the right thing as he denied knowing Jesus, but did his faith fail? How could it, if Jesus prayed that it wouldn't? Jesus anticipates Peter's return and that he will be stronger than ever – strong enough to make others strong.

- The life of faith means growth through failure, which is perseverance. St. Paul saw that in abundance in Abraham; so do we.

Abraham: A Man of the Covenant

I. REVIEW

A. Sarah’s Impatience Leads to Imprudence

We have seen that waiting for God to act can prompt the kind of impatience that leads to imprudence. So it was in the case of Sarah, who urged Abraham to fulfill God's promise of a son by using Hagar, her maid.

This was a solution that would create lasting difficulties, a pain that could have been avoided had Abraham and Sarah submitted their new plan to God for His approval.

Nevertheless, God was merciful to Hagar and to the son born to her, Ishmael. When the boy was thirteen, God appeared to Abraham to renew, expand, and formalize the covenant He had made with him and his descendants. He asked Abraham to walk blamelessly before him, as He repeated the magnificent promise to make him the father of a multitude of nations.

B. God Changes their Names

God changed Abram's and Sarai's names to indicate that He intended to use them as the foundation for the new thing He was doing on earth - creating an entire nation of people who would be His very own.

C. Sign of the Covenant

The sign of the covenant was circumcision. This act, performed in the flesh of Abraham and his household, would demonstrate their unique relationship with Him. Ishmael's circumcision at the age of thirteen would identify him as an Egyptian, not a Jew.

Although he was Abraham's firstborn son, he would not be the one through whom the covenant promise was kept. Isaac would be that son, born through Sarah. God assured Abraham that the time for that birth was not far off.

Now that Abraham has formally entered a covenant with God, after twenty-five years of living with Him, will there be any changes in their relationship? What does it mean for a man to be drawn up so dramatically in the life of God? What

will characterize his life? In this session, we will see Abraham at work as God's covenant keeper.

These questions we have about Abraham's new role aren't academic. We know that through our faith and baptism, we have also entered into a covenant with God. Who are we becoming?

II. OVERVIEW

A. Mysterious Strangers

Sometime after Abraham and all the males in his clan were circumcised, God’s promise to Abraham was repeated in a strange way.

One day Abraham saw three strangers approaching his camp near the oaks of Mamre. This new appearance of God to Abraham is somewhat mysterious. The three men stand for God. When Abraham speaks to them, sometimes he addresses them in the singular (as if there was only one person there), and sometimes in the plural (as if there were three).

They looked like ordinary travellers but one of them was the LORD himself, and the other two were his angels.

B. Eastern Hospitality

Abraham greets the three visitors with famous Eastern hospitality. He shows them respect and makes himself and his goods entirely available to them, holding nothing back. Hospitality to strangers is a profoundly human expression of our love of God, which cannot be separated from our love of man. It is a gesture of the kind of generosity that is rooted in freedom and peace.

Read: Genesis 18:1-15

[1] And the LORD appeared to him by the oaks of Mamre, as he sat at the door of his tent in the heat of the day.

[2] He lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, three men stood in front of him. When he saw them, he ran from the tent door to meet them, and bowed himself to the earth,

[3] and said, "My lord, if I have found favor in your sight, do not pass by your servant.

[4] Let a little water be brought, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves

under the tree,

[5] while I fetch a morsel of bread, that you may refresh yourselves, and after that you may pass on -- since you have come to your servant." So they said, "Do as you have said."

[6] And Abraham hastened into the tent to Sarah, and said, "Make ready quickly three measures of fine meal, knead it, and make cakes."

[7] And Abraham ran to the herd, and took a calf, tender and good, and gave it to the servant, who hastened to prepare it.

[8] Then he took curds, and milk, and the calf which he had prepared, and set it before them; and he stood by them under the tree while they ate.

[9] They said to him, "Where is Sarah your wife?" And he said, "She is in the tent."

[10] The LORD said, "I will surely return to you in the spring, and Sarah your wife shall have a son." And Sarah was listening at the tent door behind him.

[11] Now Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in age; it had ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women.

[12] So Sarah laughed to herself, saying, "After I have grown old, and my husband is old, shall I have pleasure?"

[13] The LORD said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh, and say, 'Shall I indeed bear a child, now that I am old?'

[14] Is anything too hard for the LORD? At the appointed time I will return to you, in the spring, and Sarah shall have a son."

[15] But Sarah denied, saying, "I did not laugh"; for she was afraid. He said, "No, but you did laugh."

C. Isaacs Birth is promised

After hearing the Lord’s promise that she will have a son, Sarah seems to be amused by the idea that after years of barrenness (and possibly a cessation in the act of conjugal love), she and Abraham could enjoy "pleasure" again. It may have been a laugh mixed with incredulity and delight, much like Abraham's laugh in Gen. 17. The Lord assures Sarah that nothing is too hard for Him.

Sarah then denies that she laughed, out of fear. Contrast this reaction to that of Mary, when she was also visited by an angel who spoke of a miraculous birth

(Luke 1:26-38). The angel, Gabriel, reaffirmed that with God, nothing shall be impossible. Whereas Sarah has to be rebuked for lying when good news is announced to her, Mary submits in humility and faith.

III. ABRAHAM INTERCEDES FOR SODOM

Abraham was God’s choice to found the People of God, so Abraham needed to know how the Lord dealt with unrighteousness. The cities of Sodom and Gomorrah had built up such a sinful reputation that God decided something had to be done.

Abraham’s nephew Lot was living in Sodom. That gave Abraham a strong interest in the place. And so – in a moving scene that Abraham’s descendants must have loved to tell around the campfire – Abraham pleaded with God, as would a child with his father, for the people of Sodom.

Read: Genesis 18:16-33

[16] Then the men set out from there, and they looked toward Sodom; and Abraham went with them to set them on their way.

[17] The LORD said, "Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do,

[18] seeing that Abraham shall become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall bless themselves by him?

[19] No, for I have chosen him, that he may charge his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing righteousness and justice; so that the LORD may bring to Abraham what he has promised him."

[20] Then the LORD said, "Because the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is great and their sin is very grave,

[21] I will go down to see whether they have done altogether according to the outcry which has come to me; and if not, I will know."

[22] So the men turned from there, and went toward Sodom; but Abraham still stood before the LORD.

[23] Then Abraham drew near, and said, "Wilt thou indeed destroy the righteous with the wicked?

[24] Suppose there are fifty righteous within the city; wilt thou then destroy the place and not spare it for the fifty righteous who are in it?

[25] Far be it from thee to do such a thing, to slay the righteous with the

wicked, so that the righteous fare as the wicked! Far be that from thee! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?"

[26] And the LORD said, "If I find at Sodom fifty righteous in the city, I will spare the whole place for their sake."

[27] Abraham answered, "Behold, I have taken upon myself to speak to the Lord, I who am but dust and ashes."

[28] Suppose five of the fifty righteous are lacking? Wilt thou destroy the whole city for lack of five?" And he said, "I will not destroy it if I find forty-five there."

[29] Again he spoke to him, and said, "Suppose forty are found there." He answered, "For the sake of forty I will not do it."

[30] Then he said, "Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak. Suppose thirty are found there." He answered, "I will not do it, if I find thirty there."

[31] He said, "Behold, I have taken upon myself to speak to the Lord. Suppose twenty are found there." He answered, "For the sake of twenty I will not destroy it."

[32] Then he said, "Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak again but this once. Suppose ten are found there." He answered, "For the sake of ten I will not destroy it."

[33] And the LORD went his way, when he had finished speaking to Abraham; and Abraham returned to his place.

D. God Reveals His Plan to Judge Sodom

Why does the Lord decide to confide His plan to judge Sodom to Abraham (vs. 17-19)?

God wants Abraham to know Him very well, to be deeply acquainted with what He is doing in the world.

Abraham will have the role of teacher, example, and mediator of God's blessing to his descendants and all the earth. He has this role as a result of his calling or "election" ("I have chosen him," v. 19). He is to teach his descendants how "to keep the way of the Lord by doing righteousness and justice" (v. 19).

All of this alerts us as to what comes next. We understand that whatever is about to transpire between God and Abraham is meant to do several things:

- it will teach Abraham something about justice and righteousness;
- it will make him an example of how the elect (or "chosen") are to live, and
- it will enable God to fulfill His promises to Abraham.

God intends to test the people of Sodom by visiting them (that is what "I will go down to see" means, v. 21).

He makes reference to an "outcry" that has come to Him (v. 21). Who has made this outcry? Was it Lot? Was it some of the inhabitants of the city? We don't know. However God received the outcry, He planned to visit the city to verify the gravity of their sin.

E. Abraham’s Concern about God’s Justice

Interestingly, as Abraham considers what God has told him, his primary concern is about God's character. He does not want to believe that God would allow those who live righteously (and surely he is thinking of Lot and his family) to suffer the same fate as those who live wickedly.

This kind of treatment of men by God would suggest that He is not just: *"Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?"* [v. 25].

Abraham seems to comprehend in a flash that if the Creator of the world is not just, men are in very serious trouble:

"Far be it from Thee to do such a thing....Far be that from Thee!" [v. 25]

Why? Because if the Creator is not just, then there is no difference between right and wrong. If God does not reward righteousness and punish wickedness, men can and will do whatever they want. The alternative to justice is chaos.

This protest from Abraham reveals him to be a man who believes that God is just and that He can be expected to deal justly with men. In effect, what he is saying is, "God, You are not really like that!" It is his confidence in God's true character that makes him bold to make his appeal.

F. Where Justice and Mercy Meet!

Abraham doesn't want the righteous to suffer the same fate as the wicked, so he asks God to allow the presence of fifty righteous to spare the wicked: *"Suppose*

there are fifty righteous within the city; wilt thou then destroy the place and not spare it for the fifty righteous who are in it?” Is that justice?

To allow the presence of righteous people in a city to spare judgment of the wicked in that same city is an example of how justice and mercy meet.

What a powerful moment this is in redemption history! We should get down on our knees when we read it. It is from human lips that the outline of our salvation is first established in Scripture.

Father Abraham, God's covenant-keeper, raises the possibility that righteousness can be so powerful that it spares judgment on those who deserve it. This is not a violation of justice. Rather, it is a statement of the superabundant merit of righteousness.

Abraham acknowledges that the wicked deserve to be punished, but he opens the door to the possibility that the righteous can fill up what is lacking in the wicked, thereby saving them.

And God accepts it!

Abraham perhaps realizes that the number of righteous people in Sodom may be very small. He is probably thinking of Lot's family and maybe a few others. He carefully works the numbers down to see how merciful God is and how powerful righteousness is. He stops at ten.

The reality is, of course, that ultimately it is the perfect righteousness of one Man, God's own Son, who saves the whole world! As St. Paul writes,

"Then, as one man's [Adam] trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one man's act of righteousness leads to acquittal and life for all men. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by one man's obedience many will be made righteous" [Rom. 5:18-19].

Abraham is a combination of boldness and humility, tenacity and deference, fearlessness and reverence. His urgency, confidence, and level of intimacy with the Lord do not lead to presumption, grasping, or impropriety.

He is fully engaged in this great moment with God, but he does not think of himself as the center of it. This makes him an effective and persuasive mediator.

G. Covenant-Keepers

If Abraham serves as an example of how a man lives as a covenant-keeper with God, he presents several lessons to us:

1. Covenant-keepers should occasionally expect to be visited by God in "disguise." Generous hospitality is the proper response to these visits. Sometimes He may come to us "hidden" in a family member, a co-worker, or a stranger in need. Abraham's respect for and service on behalf of his three visitors show us the way to receive Him.
2. Covenant-keepers can expect that sometimes God will ordain circumstances in our lives that are meant to be occasions for Him to reveal His nature to us. These circumstances will cause us to examine what we believe about God - Who He is and how He acts in the world.
3. Covenant-keepers should see themselves as God's co-workers, just as God described Abraham as one through whom the whole earth will be blessed. We should be prepared to pray as intercessors for those who are in need of God's mercy.
4. Abraham's prayer for Lot meant that already God was keeping His covenant promise to him of making him a "blessing" (19:29). Our prayers for others fulfill God's promise to us to make us a "royal priesthood."

As St. Peter writes: *"But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, that you may declare the wonderful deeds of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvellous light. Once you were no people but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy but now you have received mercy."* (1 Pet. 2:9-10)

5. Covenant-keepers should be as bold and as humble as Abraham was before God.

Summary

1. Sarai, Abram's wife, had doubts about God keeping His promise of a son, so she came up with her own plan, using Hagar, her maid, as a surrogate mother. Abram didn't consult God about this idea; he listened to his wife, with disastrous results. The peace of the family was shattered.
2. Hagar fled from Sarai's harsh treatment; God met her in her affliction, easing her heavy load. She had to return home, but she went back as a different woman - one who had seen God and who had hope for the future.
3. Ishmael was the son born to Abram through Hagar. When he was thirteen years old, God appeared to Abram to renew the promise of making his "name great" through a dynasty of kings by sealing a covenant with him.
4. To mark the significance of this occasion, God changed Abram's name to Abraham. This new name began the fulfillment of God's promises to him and his descendants. God was about to build a new nation through His servant, Abraham.
5. 5. Sarai's name was also changed to Sarah, a name that reflected royalty. She would become the mother of kings. This promise provoked laughter in Abraham, the kind of glee that comes from thinking about two old people being blessed like newlyweds. Abraham showed his deep attachment to Ishmael by making a request on his behalf to God, that he might be the one through whom the promises would come true.
6. 6. God blessed Ishmael, but He refused Abraham's specific request. The promises would be kept through a miraculous birth. God's plan remained intact.
7. 7. God commanded Abraham to circumcise all the males in his household. This would be a sign in the bodies of these men and their descendants of the covenant God had made with them. He would be their God, and they would be His people, ones for whom He would do great things and ones from whom He expected obedience.
8. 8. Abraham's prompt response to God's command to be circumcised, even though it would cause pain and suffering, made him an example for all those who enter into a covenant with God. He demonstrated faith in God's

promises, acceptance of the terms of the covenant, and sacrificial obedience to the Word of God.

Questions

1. It seems that Sarai had doubts of her own about whether she would ever have a son. What is the difference between what Abram did, when he doubted, and what Sarai did.
2. What should Abram have done when Sarai made this proposal? What did he actually do (v. 2)? Why do you think he acted that way? What does this remind you of?
3. What were the unexpected (but perhaps predictable) consequences of this departure from God's plan?
4. Why do you suppose that God deals kindly with Hagar, promising a great number of descendants to her through her son, Ishmael (whose name means "God hears")?
[Ishmael became the father of the Arab nations, brothers by blood to the Jews, yet in constant battle with them, just as God foretold in v. 12.]
5. God appears to Abram thirteen years after the birth of Ishmael. He is ready to turn the promise to make Abram's "name great" into a covenant. Why do you suppose He commands Abram to "walk before me, and be blameless" as He announces another covenant action?
7. Abram's name gets changed to "Abraham," which means "father of a multitude of nations." Why do you suppose he gets this name change now and not when he first left Haran?
9. What is Abraham's response to God's promise about the birth of a son to Sarah (v. 17)? What do you make of it?
10. Why do you suppose Abraham pleads with God to let Ishmael be his heir (v. 18)?
11. Notice the blessing God grants to Ishmael on account of Abraham's plea (v. 20). What does this suggest about the power of Abraham's prayers?
12. What does God finally give to Abraham, after twenty-five years (v. 21)?

Preparation for Week #15

Read:

1. Genesis Chapter 19 – RSV Catholic Edition.
2. *The Navarre Bible*: Genesis Chapter 19.
3. *Come and See Catholic Bible Study* – Genesis 18-20