

Written: Genesis 18:10-14 “The Birth Announcement That Changes Everything”

Midweek Advent #1

Wednesday December 6th, 2023

Text: Genesis 18:10-14

¹⁰ The LORD said, “I will surely return to you about this time next year, 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 years. The way of women had ceased to be with Sarah. ¹² So Sarah laughed to herself, saying, “After I am worn out, and my lord 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, about this time next year, and Sarah shall have a son.”

Exegetical Statement

God the Son comes in human form to make the special birth announcement to Abraham and Sarah that they will experience a miracle at His hand. Despite the physical impossibility she will conceive by Abraham and bear a son they will call Isaac, even though they both struggled at times to believe this. It is something impossible to hold as truth without faith. The LORD grants this faith to both, and by their holding fast to His promises they are declared to be in right standing before Him. Isaac’s birth foreshadows the even greater and more miraculous coming of God the Son into the womb of Mary, to be born as Jesus: Son of God and Son of Man. Abraham saw the foreshadowing of Jesus birth in Isaac, as well as Jesus sacrificial death for all mankind when Isaac was spared death by the substitution of the ram. Abraham held fast to these things that were far in the future by faith. We too, through our miraculous re-birth announcement by the coming of the Spirit in baptism are given the faith of Abraham to hold fast to Jesus as our Lord and Savior by faith alone.

Focus Statement:

Jesus supernatural birth was foreshadowed by the miraculous birth of Isaac. God the Son’s appearing to announce it to Abraham was foreshadowing the angels who pronounced baby Jesus to be God the Son, the Savior of the world, as well as Jesus Gospel testimony that connects Him with Abraham who had faith in God’s promised blessing to all men. And in the substitutionary sacrifice for Isaac, we see the foreshadowing of God coming to save us from eternal punishment for our sins by God Himself becoming the Lamb of Sacrifice for the world. God the Son’s appearance and announcement to Abraham foreshadows His coming to us in baptism so that we are born again into the same faith Abraham held, made children of the Heavenly Father by that faith worked by the Spirit.

Function Statement:

Why it’s important to know:

Caught up in the busyness of the Christmas season and focused on the secular celebration we can lose the wonderful fulfillment that Jesus birth is, how it was the fulfillment of God’s promises held by faith, and the miraculous wonderful re-birth that our baptism is.

What the hearer should do as a result:

Meditate on the wonderful supernatural import that Jesus birth is, as well as the wonderful gift that He comes to give us in our baptism.

Subject Sentence: The truth of Jesus’ Birth changes me forever

Introduction

When a couple is struggling to get pregnant and then it finally happens, it is truly a joyous event. And if you search the internet there are many unique ideas of how to share this joyous news with your spouse, the grandparents to be, as well as friends and family.

There is the one that I have often seen used where mom and dad post a picture on Facebook of them holding the ultrasound picture that is the first glimpse at this new gift of life God has granted. But there are some other unique and fun ideas. One is to leave a wrapped gift out on the table for the husband to find when he is in the room alone. He opens it up to find a shirt that says “Daddy”. And then his wife walks into the room wearing a shirt that says, “Mommy”. To announce this blessed event to the couple’s parents there’s the idea of buying a puzzle for them to put together. When it’s done the message reads “Surprise! Your now Grandma and Grampa!”. And when announcing the expected birth to other family and friends there’s the idea of throwing a party. You invite family and friends over to see a particular room that has been roped off with caution tape and a sign that says, “Nursery Under Construction.”

These are just some of many ways a couple can celebrate God’s “wonder in the making” that is the expected birth of a wonderful gift from God. But none of them can match the birth announcements that proceeded the miraculous birth of Isaac to Abraham and Sarah. That announcement came directly from God Himself

The LORD Himself Announces Isaac’s Birth

And when we look at the situation, it was most appropriate that it was God Himself announcing the impending birth of Isaac. After all Abraham and Sarah were far too old to have children. Abraham was around 100 years old; Sarah was around 90 years old. Can you imagine a couple at that age today making the announcement “We’re pregnant” and anybody believing them?

Abraham and Sarah themselves both struggled to believe. God had already made some wonderful and miraculous promises to Abraham: that he would be blessed by the LORD, that he would be the father of many nations, with descendants that were as numerous and the stars in the sky or the sand on the seashore, and that all the nations of the world would be blessed through him. Those promises were hard enough to grasp. But Abraham held fast to these promises of God by the gift of faith the LORD had given to him, the gift that declared Abraham to be righteous, in right standing with God.

But when it comes to these promises being realized by a child he would have with Sarah, Abraham struggled to believe. That was just too much. Didn't the LORD know how long they had tried and failed? That's why they both agreed that Abraham should try to father a child with Sarah's slave girl Hagar. And that took. So, Abraham puts forth that son Ishmael as being the answer; surely the LORD is going to use Ishmael to accomplish His plans and purposes. But God has other plans in mind. This child that Abraham and Sarah would have is going to be special. And his conception and birth must clearly be seen as happening by the hand of the LORD alone.

So it is that the birth announcement for Isaac happens when God Himself appears at the door of Abraham's camp along with two angels. Abraham is sitting at the entrance to his tent, probably dozing off as you and I would during the heat of the day. When all of a sudden, he looks up and sees 3 men standing at the entrance to the camp. And how does Abraham react? Despite the heat and his age, he jumps up to welcome them, invite them in, and then arranges for an impromptu banquet for them to enjoy. He doesn't just pull together leftovers. He has Sarah, and his servants make a special meal for them: bread, veal in broth, milk and cottage cheese, a remarkable menu since many meals would consist of just bread alone.

Now the question arises, did he recognize one of them as being the LORD God in human form? **Hebrews 13:2 Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.** This verse seems to argue he did not. So why did Abraham go to so much trouble for three strangers? Perhaps he is setting an example for all who are declared to be in right standing with God by faith as to what it means to show godly hospitality and love to strangers.

But the LORD tips his hand on His identity. **Genesis 18:10 The LORD said, "I will surely return to you about this time next year, and Sarah your wife shall have a son." And Sarah was listening at the tent door behind him.** Only the LORD God would know about the promise of a child that had been given previously to Abraham. Only He could pinpoint the date that it would happen. And it would be His return in power and His blessing that would bring it about. Not to mention this person speaking knows about the name change that the LORD gave to Sarah.

And with the testimony from the lips of the LORD God Himself Abraham believes. But Sarah does not. She is struggling with the mere impossibility of it all. **Genesis 18:11-12 ¹¹ Now Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in years. The way of women had ceased to be with Sarah. ¹² So Sarah laughed to herself, saying, "After I am worn out, and my lord is old, shall I have pleasure?"** Sarah is basically saying "I don't know who you are buddy, but what your saying is a crock." So, the LORD proves to Sarah who it is that actually is announcing this.

Genesis 18:13-14 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, about this time next year, and Sarah shall have a son.”** The one speaking has His back to Sarah, who is sitting at her tent door behind Him. Yet this man knows what she is thinking and saying to herself, because this man is God Himself. This is God the Son who has taken on a human form to appear to Abraham and Sarah, to have a fellowship meal with them, and to give them this miraculous birth announcement. His words are the very words of God, the One who speaks and makes things happen. The One whose promises are always fulfilled.

In Isaac Abraham Saw Jesus’ Birth and Day

All that being said, how does this reflect on Jesus words to the unbelieving Jews of His day?

John 8:56 **Your father Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day. He saw it and was glad.”** These Jews looked highly upon their forefather Abraham who they knew was declared to be right with God. They wanted to believe that they were too were right with Him because they were Abraham’s descendants. Jesus’ argument is that if they truly were the children of Abraham, they would rejoice in seeing and hearing Jesus just as Abraham did. And when did Abraham see and hear Jesus? Jesus is God the Son who made all of those promises to Abraham and appeared to him to promise him in person.

John 8:57 ⁵⁷ **So the Jews said to him, “You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham?”** These “Jews” are the Pharisees, the chief priests, and others who are so convinced that Jesus is not the Messiah that they are looking for a way to put him to death. They ask the question that points out the human logical impossibility of Jesus’ statement. ‘How could Abraham have ever seen you or your day. You’re not even 50 years old, and Abraham is long dead, 2,000 years ago. You are a demon possessed fool.’ Even today there are people with the same unbelief as these Jews had. They refuse the very words of Christ that are the Gospel Message because, like these Jews, that message has no place in their hearts.

John 8:58 **Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am.”** Jesus pronounces to them the divine truth that they refuse to believe but were looking for Him to confess so that they might have grounds to kill Him. Jesus declares what you and I know to be truth: as God the Son He was in existence long before Abraham was born. He is the God who called Abraham to faith, gave Him those promised blessings to him and his descendants. He is the God who took on human form to come in person to Abraham and Sarah to give them that announcement of the miraculous birth of Isaac, and to fulfill that promise a year later.

In Isaac's birth Abraham not only saw that promise of God come true, but he also saw a foreshadowing of a greater and more miraculous birth to come. Out from the descendants of Isaac would come Joseph and the Virgin Mary. And she would conceive and give birth in an even more miraculous and supernatural way to the child who was to be The Son of God and the Son of Man, the Savior of the world. Abraham, through the eyes of faith, not only saw this event foreshadowed, but He saw the one who was to be born in fulfillment of it. He gazed upon the preincarnate appearance of God the Son Himself.

He not only saw that, but He was given a foreshadowing of "Jesus' day", the reason why God the Son came to earth to be born as a human child. Abraham saw this when he was told by God to sacrifice Isaac on that altar. As Abraham held the knife above Isaac, ready to plunge it in, believing by that faith He'd been given by God that somehow God would still fulfill all his promises, even if Isaac died, it was God the Son who called out to him to stay his hand. It was God the Son who provided a ram that was placed on that altar in Isaac's place, to take his place and die his death. A ram that foreshadowed a greater sacrifice to come. A sacrifice that would take place on that same mountain 2000 years later.

When God the Son appeared to Abraham, he saw the One who would not only take Isaac's place on the altar of sacrifice, but the place of Abraham and Sarah, the place of these unbelieving Jews, my place. and yours. Jesus came to be that child of sacrifice for the sins of the whole world. His suffering, death, and resurrection is the power of salvation for all people of all times and places. Jesus' birth was the announcement that God's plan of salvation was now fully underway. It was the fulfillment of the promise made to Adam and Eve, to Abraham and Sarah through Isaac, and to all his descendants to follow. Including you and me.

Our Baptism Is God's Miraculous Re-Birth Announcement

Jesus birth announcement foreshadows your birth announcement. Now I'm not talking about your natural birth, although that is also a miraculous gift from God. I'm talking about God's miraculous re-birth announcement that is your baptism. What happened in your baptism is just as miraculous, and even more so than Isaac's. In baptism you were "born again" into the family of God. You were given the same faith that was given to Abraham whereby he believed the promises of God no matter how extraordinary and impossible they seemed. It's because of that gift, that faith by which you confess and hold fast that Jesus life, death, and resurrection are for you. That faith is the same faith that declared Abraham and all who followed him to be right with God. It's that faith that makes you a descendant of Abraham, a true child of God who declares you to be His child and wants you to call Him your Father.

Baptism is God's announcement that you have become His precious child, born again into the family of faith that includes Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, and all the believers after them. And He came to make that announcement by being really and truly present in the water and the Word. The real presence of His Spirit is what makes it all happen to you and for you. And it's all because of that very special child born on Christmas Day. The child that was God coming in the flesh to fulfill all His promises of providing a Savior. He is the God who continues to come through the means of grace to make us and keep us as precious children; to make you and keep you as His precious child.

Conclusion

People come up with all kinds of special ways to announce the expected birth of a child. But none does it any better than God Himself when He came to announce the birth of Isaac. And then sent angels to announce the supernatural birth that Isaac's foreshadowed. The birth that resulted in the coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. And because of His birth, His life, His death, and His resurrection, you have been born again into the family of God. So, in the midst of all the hoopla that we get caught up in with our shopping for Christmas, and the cute movies about Santa Clause, and the favorite secular holiday tunes, stop for a moment and contemplate that baby in the manger's birth announcement means to you. Spend some time contemplating how His birth changed your life forever, and continues to do so until the day of His final coming. Amen.