

Father Abraham

Gn 17:1-8

I. INTRODUCTION.

- A. In recent weeks, there has been great controversy surrounding Nadya Suleman, more commonly known as Octo-Mom.
 - 1. She underwent fertility treatments & gave birth to octuplets on January 26, 2009.
 - a. She gave birth to the octuplets after already having 6 other children.
 - b. Concerns have rightfully been raised about how Suleman—as a single mother—can care for 14 children.
 - 2. Other controversies have surrounded Michael Kamrava, the physician who implanted the 8 embryos.
 - a. On February 6, the Medical Board of California announced that it was investigated Kamrava & the American Society for Reproductive Medicine has expressed a concern in helping with that investigation.
 - b. The question has been raised: “How could a physician logically implant so many embryos in one mother?”
- B. Can you imagine, however, the controversy if Dr. Kamrava had implanted a single embryo in a 90 year-old woman?
 - 1. How could a 90 year-old mother—with a 100 year-old husband—ever expect to raise a child from birth through adulthood? Neither parent will live long enough & his/her brothers & sisters are likely going to be in their mid-to-late 60’s.
 - 2. But, in tonight’s text, God promises a 99 year-old man that his wife is going to conceive a child.
 - a. READ TEXT.
 - b. Yet, tonight’s text says only a little about Abraham.
 - 1) This passage is all about God—what God is going to do & how he’s going to do it.
 - 2) In this text, we see THE POWERFUL GOD, THE PROSCRIPTIVE GOD, & THE PROMISING GOD.

II. THE POWERFUL GOD, vv 1, 5c.

- A. When Abram was ninety-nine years old the Lord appeared to Abram and said to him, “I am God Almighty” (v 1).
 - 1. God reveals himself to Abram as “God Almighty.”
 - a. God has great & awesome power.
 - 1) It is God who created the world (Neh 9:6).
 - 2) God used his great mighty to bring the children of Israel out of Egyptian bondage (Deut 5:15).
 - 3) The Lord is so powerful that he is commonly referenced in the Scriptures as “the Almighty”—e.g., “The Lord our God the Almighty reigns” (Rv 19:6).
 - b. In this passage, God is going to use his great power to enable Abraham & Sarah to have a son.
 - 2. Moses records that God appeared to Abram when he was ninety-nine years old.
 - a. Why would Moses even bother telling us how old Abram was at this point? It seems there are two reasons:
 - 1) First, this demonstrates that God doesn’t always act according to our time line.
 - a) It had been 24 years since God had first promised to make Abram into a great nation! Sarai became so frustrated that she gave her handmaiden to Abram & Abram conceived Ishmael by Hagar.
 - b) God acts according to **his** timeline in accordance with **his** will, but he doesn’t always do things precisely when or how we wish he would.
 - 2) Second, God is going to use his power to do something extraordinary—enable a 90 year-old woman to conceive.
 - b. Sarai is well beyond child-bearing years when God appears to Abram.

- 1) It is true that prior to the Flood men lived a great deal longer than today & men even began to father children well after what is today a typical life-span.
 - a) E.g., Gn 5:18-20.
 - b) While we do not know how old the mothers were when they gave birth, it's not impossible that some of these women were quite old.
 - 2) However, after the Flood men move both to modern life & reproductive spans.
 - 3) We know for a fact that Sarai was well-beyond her reproductive years.
 - a) Abraham laughed when told that Sarai would conceive a child—Gn 17:17.
 - b) Sarah laughed when she overheard God telling Abraham that she would bear him a son—Gn 18:12.
 - 4) Only a God as powerful as ours could cause a 90 year-old woman to conceive.
- B. Not only did God reveal himself as the Almighty God, but he tells Abram, “I have made you the father of a multitude of nations,” v 5c.
1. Notice the use of the perfect tense here.
 - a. God doesn't tell Abraham, “I am going to make you the father of a multitude of nations.”
 - b. The Lord tells Abraham, “I have already made you the father of a multitude of nations.”
 2. Because God has already decided what he was going to do in Abraham, it's actions were certain; God has enough power to say what he will do & do it—that power is so great that God can speak of his will as **already** having been accomplished.
- C. We need to grasp that God is powerful.
1. God can use his power either to help or to destroy.
 - a. When Amaziah was getting ready to go into battle, a prophet came & told him, “God has power to help or to cast down” (2 Chr 25:8).
 - b. God has great power to help.
 - 1) God will use his great power when we pray.
 - a) Jesus told the disciples, Mt 21:22.
 - b) When faced with a crisis, do we ask for God's great power through prayer?
 - 2) God will use his great power to help us overcome temptation.
 - a) 1 Cor 10:13.
 - b) When facing the tempter, do we avail ourselves of God's “way of escape” or do we face him on our own & fail miserably?
 - c. God, likewise, has great power to cast down.
 - 1) When Nadab & Abihu worshiped inappropriately, the Lord sent fire to destroy them.
 - 2) When Korah rebelled against Moses, the earth opened & swallowed up Korah & those with him.
 - 3) The author of Hebrews tells us—Heb 10:31.
 2. Will God use his great power to help you or to cast you down?

III. THE PROSCRIPTIVE GOD, vv 1-2.

- A. READ TEXT.
- B. Not only does God have great power, but God has great expectations—he proscribes the way men are to live.
- C. Here God proscribes the way Abraham is to live.
 1. Abraham was to walk before God.
 - a. Walking before God indicates a relationship.
 - 1) Gn 5:24.
 - 2) Gn 6:9.
 - 3) God wants a relationship with us—he wants us to bring our concerns before his throne; he wants us to seek after him; he wants us to love him with our entire being.
 - b. The construction in Hebrew points to an ongoing process—Abraham wasn't to walking with God, but he was to do so continually.
 2. Abraham was also to be “blameless.”

- a. The Hebrew term for “blameless” was the term used to speak of sacrificial animals that were “without blemish.”
- b. Obviously, God’s telling Abraham to be blameless doesn’t mean that Abraham was to be perfect, for no man could ever be perfect (cf. 1 Jn 1:8).
 - 1) Abraham was not a perfect man—He lied on two occasions; when God told him to leave his country & his father’s house, he took his father & nephew with him.
 - 2) To be blameless, however, means that Abraham was to obey God.
 - a) Js 2:21-23.
 - b) Ps 18:23—Notice that David describes being blameless as keeping himself from guilt.
- D. Only by following God’s proscribed behavior would God make his covenant with Abraham—God tells Abraham, to live this way “that I may make my covenant between me and you, and may multiply you greatly” (v 2).
 - 1. Had Abraham not lived according to God’s standards, Jesus Christ would not have descended from him. God would have still sent his Son, but he would have found someone else to make the “father of a multitude of nations.”
 - 2. Obedience to the PROSCRIBING GOD is absolutely essential to receiving God’s blessings.
 - a. Ex 19:5.
 - b. 1 Jn 3:22.
- E. Are you following the PROSCRIBING GOD?

IV. THE PROMISING GOD, vv 4-8.

- A. God promises Abraham that he would be the father of a multitude of nations, that he would be exceedingly fruitful, that he would make him into nations, that kings would come from him, that God would establish a covenant between Abraham & his descendants throughout their generations, that God would give Abraham’s descendants Canaan as their possession, & that he would be their God.
- B. That is quite a lengthy list of things God promised.
 - 1. On one hand, it almost sounds as though God is a politician offering a long laundry list of campaign pledges.
 - 2. On the other hand, God is quite different from a politician seeking public office, for God carried out every single promise he made.
 - a. It seems that regardless of who is elected, many officials fail to keep their promises—organizations exist that keep track of a politician’s promises & alert the public when he/she breaks one of them.
 - b. God kept every promise he made to Abraham.
 - 1) 1 Ki 8:56.
 - 2) God is able to do what he has promised—Rm 4:20-21.
 - 3) Do we rest on the promises of God? Do you need to come tonight & rest on God’s promises of forgiveness?