



Lesson 13

ABRAHAM AND ABIMELECH

Story Elements

- **TEXT:** Gen. 20:1-18
- **Setting:** circa 1900 B.C. in Gerar
- **Main Characters:** God, Abraham, Sarah, and Abimelech
- **Plot:** Abraham's sense of self-preservation brews trouble for him and Sarah.
- **Key word(s):** "she is my _____" (vv 2, 5, 12) "he is my _____" (vv 5, 13)
- **Climax:** *Genesis 20:3 But God came to Abimelech in a dream by night, and said to him, Behold, thou art but a dead man, for the woman which thou hast taken; for she is a man's wife.*

Requisition

- 1) (vv 1-2) After the destruction of Sodom, Abraham's caravan moved south and sojourned in _____.
 - a) As he did previously after a big move (Gen. 13:10-20), Abraham pressed Sarah to disguise their relationship as brother-sister and not husband-wife. He did this because he feared he would be _____ so the local chieftain could add Sarah to his harem.
 - b) Abimelech¹ fell for the deception and took Sarah into his household.
- 2) (v 3) But God intervened. In a dream he told Abimelech that he would die because he had stolen a man's wife. We see later in the story that God had also cursed Abimelech's household with _____ (v 18).
- 3) (vv 4-5) Abimelech defended himself before the LORD:
 - a) Since he had not consummated his illegitimate union with Sarah, he asked "Wilt thou also slay a righteous nation?" What did he mean by asking that? _____
 - b) Abimelech was told by both Abraham and Sarah that they were brother and sister – he did not know that he had taken another man's wife.
- 4) (vv 6-7) God knew of Abimelech's integrity in the matter:
 - a) God had mercifully _____ him from committing sin.
 - b) God told him that Abraham was a _____. As a prophet, Abraham was under special divine care (*cf.* Psa. 105:15) and had an audience with the Almighty.
 - c) God demanded Sarah be restored to her rightful husband or "thou shalt surely _____, thou, and all that are thine."

¹ "Abimelech," which means *the divine king is my father*, is likely not a name but a title like "Pharaoh."

Rationalization

- 5) (vv 8-10) The next morning, Abimelech rose early and told all his servants what he had heard. Then he summoned Abraham:
- a) He rebuked Abraham for his deception saying, “thou hast done _____ unto me that ought not to be done.”
 - b) He asked for an explanation for Abraham’s actions: “What _____ thou, that thou hast done this?”
- 6) (vv 11-13) Abraham offered a lame rationalization for his behavior:
- a) He assumed the _____ was not in the people of Gerar, and he feared that he would be murdered for Sarah’s sake.
 - b) He justified his deception by painting it as partially true: he and Sarah were indeed _____.

Restoration

- 7) (vv 14-16) Abimelech restored Sarah to Abraham, along with a generous peace offering.
- a) He gave Abraham cattle, servants, and a thousand _____ coins.
 - b) This peace offering was a testimony of Sarah’s purity and Abimelech’s integrity, which is what is meant by the phrase “she was _____.”
- 8) (vv 17-18) Abraham restored the strength and vitality to Abimelech’s house by praying to God for _____.

Application

- 9) God in his providence restrained Abimelech from sinning with Sarah. Matthew Henry wrote, “As bad as things are in the world, they are not so bad as the devil and wicked men would have them...It is God that restrains men from doing the ill they would do. It is not from him that there is sin, but it is from him that there is not _____.”²
- 10) At times, even the greatest heroes of the faith provide more of an anti-type than a type of Christ. Abraham was willing to sacrifice Sarah’s purity to save his life, but Christ was willing to sacrifice his life to save his bride’s purity.

Ephesians 5:25 Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it ...27 That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without _____.

Answer Key

Key Word(s) “sister; brother” | 1. Gerar; a) murdered | 2. barrenness | 3. a) Abimelech probably had heard of God’s destruction of wicked Sodom and wanted to be spared a similar fate by pleading his innocence | 4. a) restrained; b) prophet; c) die | 5. a) deeds; b) sawest | 6. a) fear of God; b) half-siblings | 7. a) silver; b) reproved | 8. healing | 9. more sin | Ephesians 5:27 blemish

² Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible* (Iowa Falls: Riverside Book and Bible House, p.128).