

Who Was Sarah?

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From Sarai to Sarah: Sarah, the wife of Abraham, became a mother of nations, and kings came from her. Sarah was the only woman in the Bible whose name was changed by God. First, she was first called Sarai, which means "my princess." Then, God changed her name to Sarah, indicating "princess" to all (Soncino Commentary, comments on Genesis 17:15).

Why was Sarai's name changed to Sarah? God shows us in Genesis 17:16: "And I will bless her and also give you [Abraham] a son by her; then I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of peoples shall be from her." Sarah, a princess: She would be a mother of future nations. Also, Sarah would be a mother of kings of people, royal lineages would come from her, and she would be the mother of the royal line of King David, from which the coming Savior. God promised Sarah a son, and his name was to be called Isaac (Genesis 17:19). God would establish His covenant with Isaac as He did with Abraham, his father, for an everlasting covenant. Also, God would prove His covenant with the descendants of Isaac. Sarah learned to fully trust God!

For many years, Sarah had been unable to have children. Now, remember that this was in Old Testament times, Sarah decided to give her handmaid, Hagar, to her husband in order to acquire children by her. This was not God's plan for giving Abraham and Sarah an heir and was a terrible mistake from which they both had to learn to fully trust in God. God's promise was not fulfilled by Abraham and Sarah's efforts for their plan to have a child through Sarah's handmaid, Hagar. God performed a miracle when He gave Abraham His promised heir through Sarah.

Once Hagar had given birth to Ishmael, Hagar hated Sarah and Sarah dealt harshly with her handmaid. After many years had passed, Ishmael grew and had a relationship with his father. Finally, when Sarah was 90 years old, God again promised her a son. Sarah laughed, and overheard when God told Abraham, "I will certainly return to you according to the time of life, and behold, Sarah your wife shall have a son" (Genesis 18:10).

Nothing is too hard for God. God can do anything! He excels at all things, which is why He stated, "At the appointed time I will return to you, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son" (Genesis 18:14). Sarah learned to genuinely believe that God could and would do what He said. "By faith Sarah herself also received strength to conceive seed, and she bore a child when she was past the age, because she judged Him faithful who had promised. Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born as many as the stars in multitude—innumerable as the sand which is on the seashore" (Hebrews 11:11-12).

The Apostle Paul used Sarah as an example to teach an important lesson regarding the New Covenant: The apostle Paul refers to Sarah as the "freewoman" (Galatians 4). What did he mean by "freewoman?" When Isaac was young, he was mocked by his half-brother, Ishmael, Hagar's son. "Therefore she [Sarah] said to Abraham, 'Cast out this bondwoman [Hagar] and her son [Ishmael]; for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, namely with Isaac" (Genesis 21:10).

God told Abraham to listen to Sarah (Genesis 21:12). The Apostle Paul used this situation as symbolic of the spiritual inheritance from God. We can look to Jesus Christ as our example! But we can also learn from the lives of Abraham and Sarah. We are children of promise as Isaac was. And Sarah and Abraham are now counted as our ancestors in the faith, if we have faith. They will be counted as the parents of many believing nations. "And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Galatians 3:29).

Sarah, as an example for Christian women today: "Do not let your adornment be merely outward ... rather let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God. For in this manner, in former times, the holy women who trusted in God also adorned themselves, being submissive to their own husbands, as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, whose daughters you are if you do good and are not afraid with any terror" (1 Peter 3:3-6). The faithful women of God adorned themselves with a meek and quiet spirit, and were submissive to their husbands—as Sarah obeyed and respected Abraham with honor. The emphasis of this example is that women of God are to honor their husbands. As children of faith, we are all the children of Abraham and Sarah; and as they did, we are to be submitting to one another in the fear of God (Ephesians 5:21).