

THAT AGAIN?

Title: *The REAL Big Bang, Pt 21*

Series: Heads or Tails, Pt1

August 4-5, 2018

ser#3756

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I. POINT OF INTRIGUE & LIGHT MOMENT

A. Today we begin a new series entitled “*Heads or Tails?*” In so doing we look at the second shortest chapter in the book of Genesis, but its message is powerful and one with lasting repercussions if not learned quickly.



Our focus is a question in the form of two short words—“*That again?*” [R] Those words give us a choice to be the head or the tail. They also reveal that there are no *plaster of Paris saints of their own making in

heaven. (show photo) (“Plaster of Paris saints” is an expression meaning that in the portrayal of the person(s), most, if not all, imperfections have been removed. In other words, you can’t see the flaws of a person, only the outside, and it looks near-perfect.)

(show photo of St Brigit, p2)

B. Speaking of saints, the story is told of two brothers, Mike and Sean O'Malley.

They were the two richest men in town and complete shysters. They swindled the Church out of its property, foreclosed on the orphanage and



cheated widows out of their last mites. And that is just for starters.

One day Sean suddenly died—massive heart attack. Mike went to the local priest and demanded, “Father, our family’s good name will be upheld in this town. You will be giving the eulogy for my brother, and in the eulogy you are going to say, ‘Sean O'Malley was a true saint’.”

"I won't do such a thing," replied the Priest, “that would be a lie.”

"You will," Mike replied. "I hold the mortgage on the parish school. If you don't say my brother Sean was a saint I'll foreclose."

The priest, not sure how to respond, in fear, said, "And if I promise to say those words, you'll sign the note over

free and clear to the parish?" "Done," said Mike, and he signed the note free and clear over to the Parish.

At the funeral, the priest gave the eulogy as agreed upon: "Sean O'Malley was a mean-spirited, spiteful, penurious, lying, cheating, arrogant and hateful excuse for a human being." The church became deathly silent and faces were aghast. The Father continued, "But compared to his brother, Sean O'Malley, Mike was a saint."

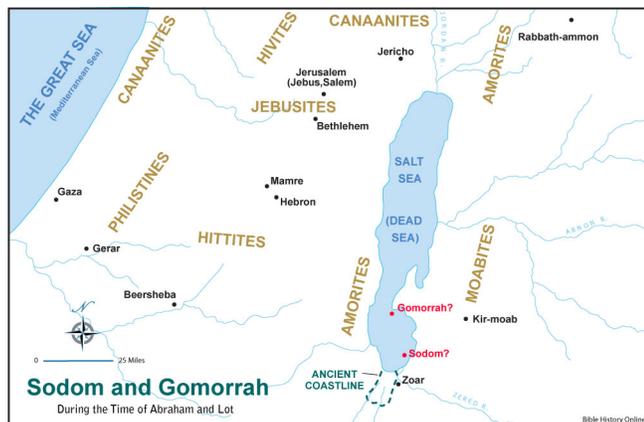
C. Let's pray!

II. OUR TEXT

Genesis 20:1-17 (NIV)

Abraham and Abimelek

1 Now Abraham moved on from there* (*Mamre) into the region of the Negev and lived between Kadesh and Shur. For a while he stayed in Gerar, **2** and there Abraham said of his wife Sarah, "She is my sister." Then Abimelek king of Gerar sent for Sarah and took her. **(show map)**



SOME OF YOU MEN ARE SAYING—"Jesus, if only!"

And

some of you women are saying, "Jesus, if only!" Ha ha!

LET'S PUT THIS IN PERSPECTIVE. Abram is 91 years old, which makes Sarah 81 years old. Yet, at 81, Sarah is still a physically stunning and beautiful woman. In fact, she is so beautiful that Abram tells a partial truth, the same partial truth he told in *Genesis 12* when he was 85 and Sarah was 75.

FUNNY! We think face-lifts, Botox treatments, wrinkle cream, augmentations, and the like, are something new. Sarah was tapped into all of that 2900 years ago; she's 81 and gorgeous. What was her secret? As Solomon said, "There's nothing new under the sun. What's been done before will be done again."

A. The events that take place in this chapter raise three important and relevant topics, which we will address this evening/morning:

1. Why did Abram tell, once again, a partial truth?
2. The misconception that beauty rewarded by God is what a person looks like on the outside.
3. How God develops character.

B. First topic: Why did Abram lie about Sarah being his wife?

III. "SHE IS MY SISTER"

A. Why did Abram lie about Sarah being his wife? The answer is found in *verse 12*. Let's pick up the reading with *verse 9*.

9 Then Abimelek called Abraham in and said, "What have you done to us? How have I wronged you that you have

brought such great guilt upon me and my kingdom? You have done things to me that should never be done.” [10](#) And Abimelek asked Abraham, “What was your reason for doing this?”

[11](#) Abraham replied, “I said to myself, ‘There is surely no fear of God in this place, and they will kill me because of my wife.’ [12](#) Besides, she really is my sister, the daughter of my father though not of my mother; and she became my wife. [13](#) And when God had me wander from my father’s household, I said to her, ‘This is how you can show your love to me: Everywhere we go, say of me, “He is my brother.” ’ ”

NOW THIS SHOULD MAKE YOU FEEL GOOD ABOUT YOURSELF. Here’s the “father of our faith” and, at the age of 91, he’s still shifting blame. Note: it’s Abimelek’s fault—his kingdom has no fear of God. It’s Sarah’s fault—she is too beautiful. But, it’s not Abram’s fault.

B. Abram lies about Sarah being his wife because:

1. (First) He’s concerned about his own skin. He’s selfish. // Men, we can be so insensitive at times.

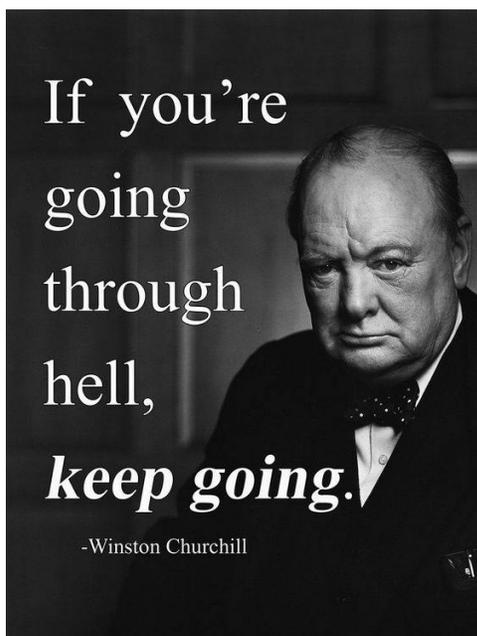
Recall what Lot told the men of the city who wanted to have sex with the two angels (**chapter 19**)? “Here are my two virgin daughters, but don’t touch these men.” Yes, you heard correctly. Wasn’t Lot called to be the “protector” of his home?

Abram does the same thing, here (**chapter 20**). How quickly, when he feared for his own skin, he was willing to put Sarai’s skin on the line.

NOW THINK IT THROUGH! Both of these men are “men of faith” (**Hebrews 11**) and men of God. Yes, there are no Plaster of Paris saints. We are all feeble, frail children of dust in need of a Savior. And the Church said, “Amen!”

2. (Second) It reveals a lapse of faith in trusting El Shaddai to be what El Shaddai has already proven to be—his protector. Oh, how quickly we forget!
 - a. How quickly the Israelites would forget God’s deliverance out of Egypt, the dividing of the Red Sea, water from the rock, manna from Heaven, and the defeat of nations twice their size.
 - b. How quickly the disciples forgot that Jesus had multiplied the loaves and the fish.
 - c. How quickly we forget that God saw us through yesterday’s trial when today’s tribulation smacks us afresh in the face.

LOVE THIS QUOTE BY WINSTON CHURCHILL:
(show poster) “If you're going through hell, keep going.”



I posted this on Tuesday morning, along with the words of Jesus, “He that endures to the end shall be saved.” **Matthew 24:13** One of our members commented: “If He brought you to it, He’ll see you through it.” Let me add, “If you brought yourself to it, and are willing to give Him the mess, He’ll also see you through it.”

That's what God did for Lot and that's what God did for Abram—carried them through their “hell.” He'll do the same for you...if you'll let Him.

Hold on to your trial, your temptation, your testing, your mess and it's still yours. Let go of it and it's His. Then watch the miracle He'll work on your behalf.

I'D BE REMISS IF I DIDN'T MENTION THIS:

Although God recognizes physical beauty, e.g.: Sarah, Rachel, Job's daughters, Tamar, Esther, Saul, Eliab and Absalom, he doesn't reward it. The world rewards physical beauty; God rewards character. **RECALL**: Man looks at the outward appearance; God sees the heart.

You young ladies and young men. You should do your best to keep in shape and look presentable—otherwise you may never find a life partner, **but** (say that with me, “But”) it's not what God rewards. He rewards character: who you are when no one is looking, who you are when the crowd wants you to go one way and Jesus wants you to go another.

HEAR ME OUT FOR A MOMENT! Why do you go the way of the crowd? It's the easy way. We want to fit in, be cool! Better to be “not so cool here” and be cool in eternity than to be cool here and hot (hell) in eternity.

RECALL when God commented on Sarah's beauty in **1 Peter 3**, he makes no reference to the physical, **ONLY** the internal.

1 [Ladies], **3** Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as elaborate hairstyles and the wearing of gold jewelry or fine clothes. **4** Rather, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight. **5** For this is the way the holy women of

the past who put their hope in God used to adorn themselves ... 6
like Sarah

C. So, let's recap what we addressed so far today:

- 1. Why did Abram tell, once again, a partial truth?**
Because he was selfish and was protecting his own hide instead of his wife's.

LESSON LEARNED: Selfishness will ALWAYS come back and bite you. But selflessness is like the sun, it casts its power to energize whether seen or not.

- 2. Although beauty is acknowledged by God, and often rewarded by man—the world of Hollywood and adverting bears that out—it's not what God rewards.** God sees and rewards the hidden beauty of the heart. Therefore, as we journey through life, we can live life for the accolades of man, or the eternal acknowledgement of our Savior.

- 3. How God develops character.**

IV. HOW GOD DEVELOPS CHARACTER

A. In brief, here's the setting. Abram tells everyone that Sarai is his sister. The King of Gerar takes Sarai to be his wife, adding her to his harem. God appears to Abimelek in a dream and tells him he's a dead man if he doesn't return Sarai to Abram, her husband.

Now, in contrast to Abram, Abimelek doesn't shift blame, but instead gives Abram a generous gift to cover his offense.

14 Then Abimelek brought sheep and cattle and male and female slaves and gave them to Abraham, and he returned Sarah his wife to him. **15** And Abimelek said, “My land is before you; live wherever you like.”

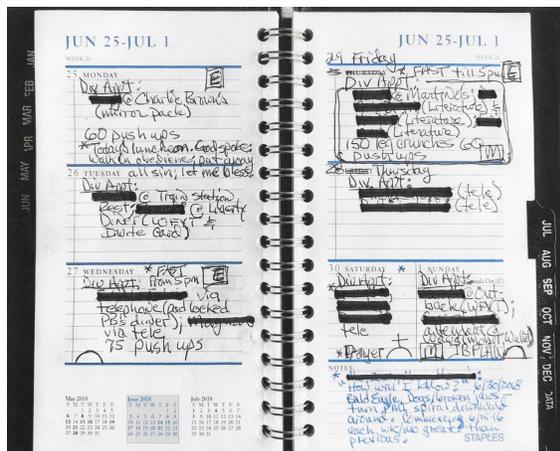
B. The beauty in this story is God’s pursuing, persevering and perfecting love, refusing to give up on us, until His character is formed in us. That’s how the title of this sermon was derived —“**That Again?**” Yes. Here’s why.

1. God wanted Abram to trust Him, to believe that God was His protector—not the lie.

REMEMBER SOME TIME BACK we looked at when the lie appeared to be rewarded by God. If you recall, they had one thing in common—they were all “lies” founded in faith to honor the cause of God: Rehab and Jael were two examples. More modern examples would be Brother Andrew smuggling Bibles into Communist Countries or Christians hiding Jews from the Nazis. But, Abram’s lie is not one of faith, it’s one of fear.

2. So, if you keep facing the same thing over and over again, maybe, just maybe, there’s a character weakness in you that God is trying to strengthen and correct. I certainly have found that true in my own life.

ILLUSTRATION: I keep a Spiritual Journal. In it are my unscheduled divine appointments, victories and defeats. **(show photo)**



a. Is it in sharing the GOSPEL? If you don't know where to start, try this line:

“What do you think of Jesus?” The Holy Spirit will take it from there.

b. Is it living out the call to “POTS?”

ILLUSTRATION: Church. Electricians. Conversation. God said, “POTS Sofia, POTS.” He'll say “no.” Wouldn't discuss God and religion. Walked back to my Study. “POTS Sofia, POTS.” Went back. “Could I pray with you?” I thought, “Here it comes. The BIG 'No'!” Mr M said, “Sure.” Afterwards, “Thanks.”

c. Is it finances? As a Christian you'll keep facing financial difficulties until you give God what is His, and not yours, the tithe

d. Is it a personality that irritates you? God will keep putting that same irritating personality alongside of you until you learn to overcome.

e. Is it saying “no” to a sin that God wants you to get victory over?

f. Is it saying “yes” to something He wants you to do?

The sooner you say “Yes” to what His perfecting love is asking, the more satisfying life will become.

V. INVITATION

Those of you here tonight/today who have never received Christ, begin here: Here's how:

Admit— your sins have separated you from God. (***Psa 14:1-3; Rom 3: 23***); **Believe** – that God did something about your sins through Jesus Christ. (The final Pascal

Lamb/Messiah.) (*Lev 17:10; Heb 9: 19-22*); **Commit** – yourself to His righteous by confessing Jesus as Lord and Savior. (*Isa 53:5; Col 1:22*); **Do it today!** (*Isa 49:8; 2 Cor 6:2*).

Father in Heaven, I'm sorry for the things I've done that are wrong: I am a sinner; forgive me. Thank You for loving me and sending your Son, Jesus, to pay the penalty for my sin. Holy Spirit, come into my heart; Jesus be my Lord and Savior. I give You my life. Amen!