

Hagar and Ishmael

October 30, 2011

1. Background

Hagar was an Egyptian slave who served as the maiden of Sarai, the first wife of Abram. According to some traditions, Hagar is seen as the daughter of the Egyptian King that Abram and Sarai met. When Abram and Sarai are unable to have a child, Sarai suggests that Hagar and Abram attempt to have a child so there will be an heir. Hagar conceives, but the relationship with Sarai becomes strained and the two women become adversaries. Hagar and her son, Ishmael, are eventually sent away, but God is with them.

Hagar and Ishmael are key figures in the Muslim faith since it is through Ishmael and Hagar that Muslims trace their ancestry back to Abraham.

2. Exploring the Text

Genesis 16:1-16

- Slavery was common in this time and place and Sarai's attempt to gain an heir through Hagar was also not uncommon, but once it becomes clear that Hagar is going to have a child and Sarai could not, the situation is filled with jealousy and anger. How do we helpfully deal with jealousy and anger in our lives?
- Hagar runs away after she is mistreated and encounters the Lord. What makes this interaction so remarkable? What can it teach us about God's views on the people of the world?

Genesis 21:8-21

- Why do you think Sarah wants to have Ishmael cast out?
- As a parent, who do you relate to each of the families in this story?
- What does it mean to you to know that God is with Ishmael?

Galatians 4:21-31

- Paul uses the story of Sarah and Hagar to share a word about freedom. What do you think of Paul's use of the story?
- What does it mean for you as a Christian to be free?