

## **Introduction**

When I graduated from high school, I was only sixteen. The oil company paid for employee's children to go away to boarding school, and they paid through the age of 19. Therefore, my first two years were paid for by the oil company as part of my high school education. That meant that I did not need the golf scholarship that TCU offered me for the first two years of school. I did use the full scholarship for my last two years at TCU. Because I was not on scholarship, I did not eat at the athletic mess hall. This was significant because it was at the student cafeteria in 1974 that I met this cute young lady from Cincinnati, Ohio. We ran into each other a few times and then I asked her out for a date. On our first date, we stayed out really late talking at a place called Quick Draw. They served really good ham sandwiches and showed western movies being played backwards. All that did not matter, we just enjoyed each other's company. We took lots of walks together, played Frisbee golf and dated the next four years, even though I did not see her much the fourth year, as I had already graduated and was playing professional golf. When this cute young lady graduated, I went to Fort Worth and asked her to marry me. She accepted my offer, and we got married on August 26, 1978. Today is our fortieth wedding anniversary. That is a milestone.

Milestones originally were large stones that were placed every mile on a road or path, hence the name. The most common use of the word today is a significant event in life or history. In our lives, our wedding date is a milestone. Each anniversary we take time to remember this special date. Some anniversary dates are more celebrated than others. Some anniversaries have special gifts that are associated with them. The 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary is known as the Ruby Anniversary and some couples give jewelry with rubies in them.

There are other milestones. On Facebook, there is a timeline and they will automatically populate your timeline with milestones. Facebook uses any changes made to your profile to populate your timeline. These milestones could include having a child, a change in job status, or relational status. Other people can post pictures and things to your timeline.

On Linked-In, they do the same thing and they send out notices to congratulate someone for their 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary at a job or a promotion. Those are also milestones. One of the things that is associated with milestones is a celebration. I wished Bob and Beth Schinlder a Happy Anniversary earlier this week and Facebook automatically had a party animation that played when I posted my congratulations.

In our text today, there are three specific milestones. The first milestone is the birth of Isaac. The birth of a child is always a celebration. I have called this the celebration of the fulfillment of God's Promises. The second milestone is the circumcision of Isaac. I have called this the Celebration of God's Covenant. The third milestone is the day that Isaac was weaned. Our text says that Abraham made a great feast that day. It was a big celebration. I have called that the Celebration of Other Life Events. Let's read our text together.

### **Celebrating The Milestones In Our Lives**

1. Celebrating the Fulfillment of God's Promises
2. Celebrating God's Covenant
3. Celebrating Other Life Events

(Gen 21:1-8) “Then the LORD took note of Sarah as He had said, and the LORD did for Sarah as He had promised. {2} So Sarah conceived and bore a son to Abraham in his old age, at the appointed time of which God had spoken to him. {3} Abraham called the name of his son who was born to him, whom Sarah bore to him, Isaac. {4} Then Abraham circumcised his son Isaac when he was eight days old, as God had commanded him. {5} Now Abraham was one hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him. {6} Sarah said, "God has made laughter for me; everyone who hears will laugh with me." {7} And she said, "Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? Yet I have borne him a son in his old age." {8} The child grew and was weaned, and Abraham made a great feast on the day that Isaac was weaned.”

## 1. Celebrating the Fulfillment of God’s Promises

In Genesis 12:4, Abram left his family and departed from Haran to the Promised Land. He was seventy-five years old at the time. God promised him that He would make a nation out of him and give his descendants this land. The promise of Isaac was given at the age of seventy-five. In verse five we see that Abraham was one hundred years old when Isaac was born to him. Abram has waited twenty-five years for this milestone to occur. I find this humorous. Sarah is ninety years old and past child-bearing age. Yet, in verse seven she said, “Yet I have borne him a son in his old age.” She is the one that had to carry the child for nine months. She is the one that had to deliver this baby at the age of ninety.

(Gen 12:4) “So Abram went forth as the LORD had spoken to him; and Lot went with him. Now Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran.”

When I study a passage, I like to look for words or phrases that are repeated. They are a great indication of what the passage is about, or one of the main themes. In our passage today, Abraham’s old age is mentioned three times. In verse two “Sarah conceived and bore a son to Abraham in his old age.” In verse five, “Abraham was one hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him.” And in verse seven Sarah said, “yet I have borne him a son in his old age.” The significance of the fulfilled promise in Abraham’s old age is that it was only explainable in terms of who God is. There was nothing that Abraham or Sarah could do in the natural. In Hebrews we find that Sarah received the ability to conceive, even beyond the proper time of life. It was by faith that she conceived and bore a son.

(Heb 11:11-12) “By faith even Sarah herself received ability to conceive, even beyond the proper time of life, since she considered Him faithful who had promised. {12} Therefore there was born even of one man, and him as good as dead at that, as many descendants AS THE STARS OF HEAVEN IN NUMBER, AND INNUMERABLE AS THE SAND WHICH IS BY THE SEASHORE.”

But, Sarah was not alone. Hebrews tells us that Abraham was as good as dead. In Romans 4 Paul said that Abraham in faith contemplated his own body, now as good as dead since he was a hundred years old, and the deadness of Sarah’s womb, yet with respect to the promise of God, did not waver in unbelief but grew strong in faith, being fully assured that what God had promised He was able also to perform. The point of this passage is that God did the impossible for Sarah and Abraham. Abraham, the father of our faith, saw this promise fulfilled because of his faith.

Rom 4:19-21) “Without becoming weak in faith he contemplated his own body, now as good as dead since he was about a hundred years old, and the deadness of Sarah's womb; {20} yet, with respect to the promise of God, he did not waver in unbelief but grew strong in faith, giving glory to God, {21} and being fully assured that what God had promised, He was able also to perform.”

We have another birth that was promised. In Isaiah 7:14, God promised that Jesus, the Messiah, would be born of a virgin. His name will be called Immanuel, which means God with us. In Isaiah 9:6, God spoke again of the Promised Messiah, saying, “a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us, and the government would rest on His shoulders. His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.” In many other places, more details of the Promised Messiah were given.

(Isa 7:14) “Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel.”

(Isa 9:6) “For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.”

We have the fulfillment of that promise in Luke. An angel comes to Mary and tells her that she will give birth to the Son of God. She asked, “How can this be, since I am a virgin?” This was a specific answer to the promise given in Isaiah 7 that the Messiah would be born of a virgin.

(Luke 1:34-35) “‘Mary said to the angel, 'How can this be, since I am a virgin?’ {35} The angel answered and said to her, ‘The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy Child shall be called the Son of God.’”

In Luke 2, at the birth of the Promised Messiah, the angel of the Lord visited shepherds, saying, “Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people.” Then, a multitude of heavenly hosts appeared with the angel and they were praising God, saying, “Glory to God in the highest, and on the earth peace among men with whom He is pleased.” The shepherds went and found Jesus, and after celebrating with them, they went back to their fields and flocks, glorifying and praising God for all that they had heard and seen.

(Luke 2:7-20) “And she gave birth to her firstborn son; and she wrapped Him in cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn. {8} In the same region there were some shepherds staying out in the fields and keeping watch over their flock by night. {9} And an angel of the Lord suddenly stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them; and they were terribly frightened. {10} But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people; {11} for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. {12} "This will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger." {13} And suddenly there appeared with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, {14} “Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased.”...{20} The shepherds went back, glorifying and praising God for all that they had heard and seen, just as had been told them.”

God threw His own party at the birth of His Son. He sent angels and a heavenly host to celebrate the birth of the Promised Messiah. The birth of any child is a time to celebrate and rejoice. But, the birth of the Promised Messiah was a special event that was celebrated.

Many years ago Karen and I were determined to get out of debt. We lived well below what most people would have done. We were committed to tithing and to becoming debt free. We cut out all extra expenses and lived as frugally as a large family could. We also prayed regularly about becoming debt free. One day as I was praying to be debt free, the Lord spoke to me. The longest debt that I saw in the Scriptures was seven years. On the seventh year, the year of remission, debts were forgiven. So, I prayed for us to be debt free in seven years. On that morning the Lord instructed me to pray that we would be debt free in three years. So, we changed the way that we prayed to reflect His word to us.

In addition to praying to become debt free, we prayed lots of different promises from God's Word. In Proverbs 19:14, I saw that "house and wealth are an inheritance from fathers, but a prudent wife is from the LORD." I thanked God for my prudent wife, but I prayed that God would move on the hearts of our fathers, on both sides of the family, to help us pay off our only debt, our house. Exactly three years from the time the Lord spoke this to me, Karen got a call from one of her grandfathers and he asked her how much we owed on our house. Then, he said he was sending a check to pay off our mortgage. Karen and I paid off our house mortgage and were finally debt free, and then we celebrated the fulfillment of that promise. I kept a prayer journal and it was amazing how many answers to prayers we saw.

We need to celebrate the fulfillment of promises in our lives. Some of these promises are everyday things, and some are big things. When I see enrollments for our drilling classes come through, I immediately thank God for His provision. I used to take a lot of these for granted, but in the severe downturn in our industry, I have learned to celebrate every single enrollment.

God's Word is full of promises. In 2 Peter 1:4 we read that God has granted us His precious and magnificent promises so that we may become partakers of the divine nature. God's Word is full of these promises. When I am in need of something, I look for a promise from God's word that pertains to that need. Then, I look to see if there are any conditions to those promises. Some of God's promises have conditions that we must meet; other promises are unconditional. God's promise to Noah that He would not destroy the earth again through a flood is unconditional. Whether people believe it, stand on it or simply ignore it, God will honor that promise that He made.

(2 Peter 1:4) "For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust."

Conditional promises have something for us to do, or conditions to be met, before the promise will be fulfilled. In Proverbs 3 God promises to make our way straight. However, there are several conditions. He says that we must trust in Him with all our heart, lean not on our own understanding, and acknowledge Him in all our ways. Those are three conditions that must be met.

For us to see more fulfilled promises in our lives, we need to become more aware of all of the precious and magnificent promises that He has made to us. Then, we need to stand on those promises. That is what Abraham did. Notice what Paul wrote in Romans 4:20-21, “yet, with respect to the promise of God, he did not waver in unbelief but grew strong in faith, giving glory to God, {21} and being fully assured that what God had promised, He was able also to perform.” Abraham stood on the promise that God had given him, that Sarah would give birth to Isaac. Notice that Abraham also gave glory to God for that promise. Abraham celebrated the fulfillment of that promise. We need to stand on the promises of God, and we need to celebrate and give glory to God for the fulfillment of those promises in our lives. Praise and worship is a wonderful celebration of what God has done for us.

## 2. Celebrating God’s Covenant

The second milestone that is celebrated is God’s covenant. On the eighth day, Abraham circumcised Isaac, just as God had commanded. In Genesis 17, God said, “This is My covenant, which you shall keep, between Me and you and your descendants after you; every male among you shall be circumcised...it shall be the sign of the covenant between Me and you.” Abraham did according to all that God commanded him. The circumcision of Isaac went on Abraham’s timeline of milestones.

(Gen 17:10-12) “This is My covenant, which you shall keep, between Me and you and your descendants after you: every male among you shall be circumcised. {11} "And you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskin, and it shall be the sign of the covenant between Me and you. {12} "And every male among you who is eight days old shall be circumcised throughout your generations, a servant who is born in the house or who is bought with money from any foreigner, who is not of your descendants.”

The sign of the covenant, circumcision, was a painful and bloody event. In Exodus 4, Zipporah circumcised their son and said to him, “You are indeed a bridegroom of blood to me...because of the circumcision.” It was also a painful event. When Joshua was about to enter the Promised Land, he circumcised all the men that had not been circumcised during the forty years of wandering in the desert. In Joshua 5, it says that “when they had finished circumcising all the nation, they remained in their places in the camp until they were healed.”

(Exo 4:25-26) “Then Zipporah took a flint and cut off her son's foreskin and threw it at Moses' feet, and she said, "You are indeed a bridegroom of blood to me." {26} So He let him alone. At that time she said, "You are a bridegroom of blood"—because of the circumcision.”

(Josh 5:8) “Now when they had finished circumcising all the nation, they remained in their places in the camp until they were healed.”

The sign of the covenant was a bloody and painful ordeal. Joshua and Israel were not out celebrating the covenant at that time. However, because of God’s covenant with them, they would forever celebrate. They would celebrate God’s choosing of them. They would forever celebrate God’s goodness and mercy towards them. They would forever celebrate His favor and blessing on them. They would forever celebrate God’s unfailing love towards them.

At the time of Jesus' crucifixion, the disciples did not celebrate. He was establishing a new covenant with us. It was a bloody and painful sacrifice. But, after He had paid for our sins and risen from the dead, the church celebrated. We celebrate His covenant with us. We take time every week to partake of His broken body and His blood in the Lord's Supper. Jesus said to do this in remembrance. We remember His death and the new covenant that He made with us through the shedding of His blood. (See Matt 26:26-30.)

After Jesus and the disciples shared the Last Supper, they sang a hymn. Why did they sing a hymn? The Greek word is *hymnos* (Strong's G5214) and Strong's says it means to sing a religious ode or celebrate God in song. We celebrate God with a hymn as we remember the covenant that He established with us. We celebrate our victory over death because of what Jesus did. We celebrate our victory over sin because of what Jesus did. We celebrate God's forgiveness and mercy. We celebrate His goodness. We celebrate God because of the covenant that He made with us.

(Mark 14:26) "After singing a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives."

### 3. Celebrating Other Life Events

In verse eight we find that Isaac grew and was weaned, and on the day that he was weaned, Abraham made a feast. The Hebrew word, *mishteh*, is translated as feast, but it actually means a drinking occasion. The word *mishteh* (Strong's H4960) comes from *shawtha* (Strong's H8354), which means to drink. It is used 434 times in the Old Testament, and refers to any kind of drinking, water, wine or other. Abraham through a big, festive, party to celebrate this special occasion.

(Gen 21:8) "The child grew and was weaned, and Abraham made a great feast on the day that Isaac was weaned."

I studied and pondered what was so special about the day that Isaac was weaned. The Hebrew word that is translated as weaned is *gamal* (Strong's H1580). It is used 37 times in the Old Testament and it is translated as weaned twelve times. It means to treat a person, to benefit a person, to bestow or deal bountifully, or to reward a person.

In 1 Samuel 24:17, David had just cut off a corner piece of Saul's garment in the cave. He could have easily have killed Saul, but he spared him. There was no malice in David towards Saul. When he revealed himself to Saul, Saul responded to him saying, "You are more righteous than I; for you have dealt well with me, while I have dealt wickedly with you." The word *gamal* is used to describe how they dealt with one another. In Proverbs 31:12, in describing an excellent wife, Solomon wrote, "She does him good and not evil all the days of her life." The phrase "does him good" is the word *gamal*. An excellent wife deals bountifully with her husband all of her days. She bestows honor to him all of his days.

In our passage today, Sarah had dealt bountifully with Isaac. She had nursed him and done all that she could do for him. Now, he was entering a new stage in his child development. It was a milestone on his life timeline. Abraham and Sarah acknowledged the fulfillment of one stage and the beginning of a new stage, and Abraham threw a festive party with plenty of wine to celebrate the occasion.

How many of you heard or read about four-year-old Joshua Salmoiraghi this week? His father is a disabled veteran and a pastor, and his mother is a major at the Peterson Air Force Base in Colorado Springs. Little Joshua was diagnosed with a tumor on his left kidney in June 2017. They removed the tumor surgically and then he went through radiation and chemotherapy at the Children's Hospital of Colorado. While at the Children's Hospital, the Colorado Springs police force made him an honorary officer. After Joshua's last round of treatment, the police department came to the Children's Hospital to celebrate the occasion. There is a bell at the hospital and children that have completed their cancer treatments and are cancer free get to ring the bell. They all clapped and celebrated as Joshua rang the bell.

There are lots of occasions for you and I to celebrate. We celebrate birthdays. We celebrate weddings and anniversaries. We celebrate graduations from high school and graduations from college. Today, we even celebrate graduations from kindergarten. We celebrate hole-in-ones and other accomplishments. One of my friends, Vernon Betteridge, in Georgia was a great bowler. He had bowled thirteen 300-games when I was there. When you bowl a 300-game, you celebrate.

One of the churches that Karen and I went to held a fall festival every year. They had square dancing, apple bobbing, and all sorts of fun and games. It was a very festive occasion and everyone had fun. I am a very serious person, and I believe there is much kingdom work to be done. There are so many people without Christ and without hope. There are so many Christians that need to be back in church, and to be healed from past hurts. There are so many worldly Christians that need to be mentored and disciplined. There is work to be done. But, the balance of this is that God wants us to be full of joy. Jesus took time on more than one occasion to celebrate. His first recorded public miracle was making wine out of water at a wedding. (See John 2:6-11.) They were celebrating a special occasion and He participated in a miraculous way. When His disciples came back from their first mission, they were celebrating everything that had happened. Luke records that Jesus rejoiced in the Holy Spirit. (See Luke 10:17-21.) I believe that God wants us to be full of joy and to celebrate. We need to be focused on kingdom work, but we also need to celebrate the milestones in our lives.

## **Conclusion**

Today, we have looked at celebrating the fulfillment of God's promises in our lives. Second, we looked at celebrating God's covenant with us. We do that every week as we share the Lord's Supper and remember the New Covenant that He has made with us. We also looked at celebrating special occasions and other life events. Is your life characterized by joy and celebration? Do you celebrate the special occasions? Do you regularly celebrate God and what He continues to do for you? Are you full of God's joy? Do you rejoice always?

One of the themes of the book of Philippians is joy. Even though there were some problems in the church, Paul exhorted them to rejoice. In Philippians 3:1, he said, "Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord..." Then, in Philippians 4:4, he wrote, "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice." God is wanting us to be people who rejoice always and celebrate.

Let's Pray!

**Introduction** (Gen 21:1-8)

1. **Celebrating the Fulfillment of God's Promises** (Gen 12:4, Heb 11:11-12, Rom 4:19-21, Is 7:14, 9:6, Luke 1:34-35, 2:7-20, Pr 19:14, 2 Pet 1:4, Pr 3:5-6)
  
2. **Celebrating God's Covenant** (Gen 17:10-12, Exo 4:25-26, Josh 5:8, Mark 14:26)
  
3. **Celebrating Other Life Events** (Gen 21:8, 1 Sam 24:17, Pr 31:12, John 2:6-11, Luke 10:17-21, Phil 3:1, 4:4)

**My Application today:**