

Abraham Had but One Son

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Abraham Had Two Sons
(*Galatians 4:22*)

Abraham Had but One Son
(*Hebrews 11:17*)

Claiming the above texts contradict each other is a classic example of using only part of a quotation in order to make a false accusation against God's word. To understand these scriptures correctly, they must be read in their entirety, especially the section in Hebrews.

By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he (Abraham) who had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, ¹⁸**of (to) whom it was said, 'In Isaac your (Abraham's) seed shall be called'** (Heb. 11:17-18; Ed. notes in parentheses; emphasis added; NKJV used throughout unless otherwise noted).

By omitting verse 18, only part of the story is told. To get the whole truth, verse 18 must be included because it shows the nature in which Isaac was different from his older brother Ishmael (Gen. 16:15). Although Abraham begot Ishmael, Ishmael's blessing was different from Isaac's (see study: Allah's Message to the Muslim World). It is in this sense that Isaac was begotten differently, because **Isaac's purpose was distinct from Ishmael's**. It was through Isaac's lineage that the Promised Seed, Jesus Christ (Gen. 3:15), would be begotten by Almighty God; specifically through a descendant whose name was Mary.

Also of importance is the fact that Isaac's mother, Sarah, was barren and could not have children of her own. Therefore, it took a miracle

from God to open her womb at the age of 90, when she was already well past menopause. So **the method of Isaac's birth was very different than Ishmael's**. It could be said that Ishmael was the first natural born son of Abraham, while Isaac was the supernatural born son of Abraham, because of God's intervention.

To summarize, Isaac was the only begotten son of Abraham, through a miraculous intervention, and the end result of God's promise to Isaac was the birth of Jesus Christ, while Ishmael was a begotten son of Abraham who received different promises, which were related to physical blessings, but not to a lineage ending with the birth of Christ. The apostle Paul explained this difference in the book of Galatians.

For it is written that Abraham had two sons: the one by a bond woman (Hagar), the other by a free woman (Sarah). ²³But he (Ishmael) who was (born) of the bond woman was born according to the flesh (natural procreation), and he (Isaac) of the free woman through (a) promise (of Page 2 supernatural intervention; cf. Gen. 18:9-14; 21:1-3) (Gal. 4:22-23; Ed. notes in parentheses).

So there is no contradiction between the scriptures used to purport that God's word is untrustworthy (cf. Gen. 3:1). Instead, these scriptures reveal important distinctions between Ishmael's and Isaac's births, which were meant to teach important spiritual lessons.

Which things (different births of Ishmael and Isaac) **are symbolic**. For these are (picture) two covenants: the one from Mount Sinai (including the animal sacrificial system as a reminder of sin, and a temporary method of dealing with it until Christ's death fulfilled that aspect of God's law; cf. Mt. 5:17) which gives birth to bondage (cf. Heb. 10:4), which is Hagar

(Gal. 4:22-24; Ed. notes in parentheses; emphasis added).

But the Jerusalem above is free (pictured by Sarah – the free woman), which is the mother of us all (those who repent of sin) (Gal. 4:26; Ed. notes in parentheses).

Therefore, instead of being contradictory, these scriptures reveal the purpose for Isaac's birth, which pointed to the future birth of Jesus Christ and the redemption provided by his sacrifice, for those who repent of living a sinful life (Ac. 2:38; Rom. 6:1-6).

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