

Text: Genesis 24:1-67

Title: A Wife for Isaac

Truth: God arranges for the continuance of the Abrahamic Covenant

Date/Location: Sunday March 19, 2023 at FBC

Introduction, v. 1

- A. Genesis follows real life. Grievances and joys happen like the tide going out and coming back in. To every event there is a season: birth, and testing, and death, and marriage, and death again, and birth again (twins!), and trials, and blessing, and lost opportunity, and conflict, and moving away (brief outline of Genesis chapters 21-28).
- B. Prov. 18:22 says, "He who finds a wife finds a good thing, and obtains favor from the LORD." Gentlemen, remember Prov. 5:18 and following: "Let your fountain be blessed, and rejoice in the wife of your youth." And then also Prov. 19:14—"House and wealth are inherited from fathers, but a prudent wife is from the LORD." Think about the blessing that your wife is. And if your marriage needs some tuning up so that the blessing is running smoothly, take yourselves to the shop! Read the Bible together. Read a good marriage book together. Get some help from Christian friends, or from your pastor.
- C. In Genesis 24, the storyline is how Isaac found Rebekah. Actually, it is about how Abraham commissioned Eliezer to find a wife for Isaac. No, actually it is how *God* provided a wife for Isaac, using the agency of an angel sent ahead of the human messenger, and the human agency of Eliezer and Abraham and Rebekah and her family to accomplish this needful task for the continuance of the Abrahamic covenant.
- D. This chapter is a beautiful account, and one of the most emotionally stirring in the Bible, particularly at verses 63-67. It begins by telling us about Abraham's old age and how the Lord had blessed him in all things. This is indicative of the fulfillment of the covenant in 12:2 where God promised to bless Abraham. God was faithful to His word; He had done as He promised!

I. Commissioning the Servant, v. 2-9

- A. The second scene of the chapter describes that Abraham called his servant and made him promise to find a wife from among Abraham's relatives, rather than from among the Canaanites. Putting "your hand under my thigh" indicates the taking of a solemn oath. Abraham also requires him to NOT take Isaac out of the land in which he dwells. This was because God had promised the land of Canaan to Abraham.
- B. Note that there were certain qualifications for the wife: 1) she had to be from among close relatives of Abraham; 2) she had to be willing to come back to the land of Canaan. If she was not willing, then the servant was released from the oath. Abraham did not want his son to marry an idolatrous woman from the nearby region. Evidently, he knew something about the religious inclination of Nahor's family and wanted that kind of woman.
- C. Although we can learn many things from this passage, note that this particular way of going about finding a way is not normative for us. That means it is not directly applicable to us. **First**, Abraham knew from God that He would send an angel on ahead to make sure things turned out well. We do not know if that will happen for us or not. **Second**, Isaac *had* to have a wife as part of the Abrahamic covenant. No one today is in that kind of situation where a key Biblical covenant rides on you or your children being married.

II. The Circumstantial Fleece, 24:10-21

- A. The third scene shows that after Abraham's servant agreed to the oath, he immediately commenced on a 1,200+ mile round-trip journey to Mesopotamia, to the city of Nahor. Remember the end of chapter 22 about Nahor's family. This whole trip would have taken nearly a couple of months.
- B. Eliezer prayed for success and outlined to the Lord a certain set of requested circumstances by which he would know that God was guiding him to success. The girl who happened to be the one who responded in a certain way would be the one for Isaac.

- C. It is interesting to note that the events served as more than just a random “checkpoint” in the process of finding a suitable wife. Do you notice the kind of character that Eliezer was looking for in a young woman, and the kind of character that she displayed? She was friendly, hospitable, had a mindset to serve others, and was energetic in her service. She drew water for him and likely his traveling companions also, and for 10 camels—probably enough water to fill our baptismal tank! Eliezer was looking for such a woman to be a suitable helper to Isaac, his master and next one to carry the torch of God’s Abrahamic covenant.
- D. Notice that even though his specified events did occur, the servant in verse 21 was still unsure as to whether the Lord had prospered his journey. The two qualifications listed earlier still had to be met. Namely, the daughter must be among the more distant relatives of Abraham. And, she had to be willing to pick up and leave everything to go marry a man she did not know!
- E. At this point, we can add another reason why this chapter does not give us a normative truth for how to find a wife. **Third**, the circumstances described for finding a wife are not the only way to do so, nor are they the best way. In fact, I would freely say that for a young woman to move away from family and go to marry a man unknown to her is not a good idea. Besides being unnecessary because there are numerous means of communication, and travel is inexpensive in time and money, it is dangerous. You must look before you leap. And I am not only referring to physical danger. You simply **MUST** find a spouse who is worthy of marrying, a good person, one who is committed to marriage. In this scenario, the young woman’s father could have gone with her to scope out the situation. I say this because there are some Christians of the more mystical sort who would take this portion of Scripture as if it were directly applicable to themselves.

III. The Contractual Arrangement of the Marriage, 24:22-53

- A. In verses 22-27, the servant’s first question was answered. Rebekah *was* from Abraham’s distant family. She invited the servant to come to stay with the family (25, 28-33). He bowed down his head and worshiped the Lord. This is the second

occurrence of the word “worship” in the Bible. In chapter 22, Abraham took Isaac with him to Mount Moriah to worship. Notice his posture (bowing down) for worship to the Lord. The Lord had led him thus far. But still one other question remained.

- B. Then the young woman runs home to tell this unlikely story to her family. Her brother Laban came out and spoke to Eliezer and invited him in. The servant explained his situation (34-41) and what happened earlier that day (42-48). Now he came directly to the second question (49-52), which was whether the girl would be willing to do so and would be allowed by her family to come with him. An affirmative answer came from the family.
- C. The servant again worshipped God (v. 52). He did so because the Lord led him providentially to the right place. He will lead you too—if you will but follow. There is no promise of marital or material blessing in the gospel and there may be trouble associated with following God, but the kind of blessing that God gives to those who serve Him reaches far beyond material into inner spiritual blessing that money cannot purchase. Have you paused to worship God when He has done you good? When He has given you a wife, a child, a home, a church, a significant new possession, an insight into the Bible—have you bowed your face to the ground or dropped to your knees and profoundly thanked God? It is not too late to do that even now.

IV. The Coming of the Bride, 24:54-66

- A. After a night of celebration and gifts, the servant wanted to set out the next morning to go home instead of staying for 10 more days. Rebekah was asked if she was willing to go, and she said she was. The family offered her their blessings, not knowing when they might see her again, if ever. Read that blessing—they wished that she would become the mother of thousands of ten thousands and that her offspring would possess the gates of all who hate them.
- B. This scene will become more poignant to you, parents, as your children come to adulthood and leave the nest.
- C. So, Rebekah went along with the servant. When they came near to home, Isaac was out walking in the field at evening time. He may

have been meditating on things after the death of his mother Sarah, or whether the servant’s journey for him was going to yield a favorable result, or on the Lord’s promises to his father and to him. Then, he saw the caravan coming with his bride. What an exciting scene!

- D. The servant informs Rebekah that she is approaching her now betrothed soon-to-be husband. He also informs Isaac of everything that had happened.
- E. Rebekah reacted by covering herself with a veil. Her face was covered by tradition until they were married. This may seem a strange tradition. In our culture, a wedding-day veil was a symbol of modesty, reverence, and obedience. That significance is quickly passing away, but it is a good significance, and we would do well to keep it. It reminds us of the need for modesty in our attire. Rebekah was unquestionably modest as she approached her new husband. For us, it may be hard to define immodesty, but it is often easy to spot it or the opposite of it. We must be very careful and selfless to be modest, and not just in the matter of head coverings. If nothing else, we can be sure we need to be modest in our dress because God commands it—1 Timothy 2:9. There, the word means appropriate, respectable, honorable. It is the opposite of worldly, fleshly, lustful, loose, immoral. The time for “immodesty” is in the privacy of your marriage, not outside of it.

V. The Beginning of the Marriage, 24:67

- A. The Bible summarizes the marriage itself and one of its affects: it brought comfort to Isaac after his mom’s passing. This is not the only result, but it was significant at that time in his life.
- B. The comfort that Isaac received from companionship reminds us of several truths. First, it is not good for a man to be alone (Gen. 2:18). He was 40 years old at the time of his marriage (Gen. 25:20). His dad was 140 years old; it had been 3 years since his mother Sarah died (chapter 23). Evidently there was no woman among the servants of the large household that was his age or type. Second, comfort from grief can be found in your close personal relationships. In this situation, it is the intimate closeness of

marriage—someone to love, talk to, walk with, work beside, share meals with, etc. Have grief? Be diligent to be close to those relationships that God has placed around you—especially immediate family, church, and others. Isolating yourself from these relationships will only serve to exacerbate the effects of grief. Isaac had been two to three years in grief over his mother. It was high time for him to move to the next phase of life. Third, if we recognize that these relationships are gifts from God, they will remind us that God has not forsaken us. He has provided for us.

- C. The text also says that Isaac loved her—not just her comfort, but *her*. This propelled them forward in the coming years to eschew the polygamous environment around them. Polygamy today is illegal in most places because we have carried over the basic law of God that marriage is between one man and one woman, and we recognize intuitively that polygamy is damaging to women, families, and society. But Abraham had more than one wife, and Jacob had more than one. Isaac did not apparently follow this pattern.

But there were other problems between these two which were displayed in the favoritism of each for their children and in the repeat of Abraham’s “my wife is my sister” debacle.

Conclusion

God made arrangements for Isaac to find a wife, thus to be able to have children, and to propagate the Abrahamic lineage to the next generation. The promise was secure.

For us, it would be good to consider some objective principles for finding a marriage partner, for the exact experience of the servant of Abraham is not how it works. What are some of these principles? One is that you must be solid in your conviction that marriage is a permanent establishment. So, only a high quality person is a candidate for you to consider for marriage. Physical appearance is not the guide for this requirement...

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