

Genesis – Lesson 19

The Search for Isaac's Wife

Read Genesis 24:1-9

1. (a) List three things that Abraham was *concerned* about when it came to Isaac's future wife. Why does Abraham not want Isaac to take a wife from the Canaanites?

Abraham 1) wanted to assure that Isaac was set up with a proper wife, in order to continue the bloodline and the promises of God, 2) did not want Isaac to have a wife from among the Canaanites, but someone from his own kindred, and 3) did not want Isaac to leave the land of Canaan to travel back to Ur, possibly causing him to remain there. Abraham does *not* want Isaac to marry a Canaanite because it is highly likely that such a marriage would deter Isaac's worship of the God of Abraham. Frequently, such marriages are *condemned* in the Old Testament, because the Lord knows that marriage alliances with foreigners *will* result in Yahweh-worshippers to be drawn away to idols and foreign gods.

- (b) Compare 24:2 with 15:2. What was the *name* of this servant? Why does Abraham send *him*?

It would appear that this is Eliezer of Damascus, who was previously introduced in the story. Abraham needs someone who is *extremely* trustworthy to carry out this delicate project, so he sends his most trusted servant. It is also reasonable that Eliezer is familiar with Isaac, having lived in the household with him for more than 35 years; Eliezer would understand what "kind" of woman would suit Isaac when he set out. Additionally, given that Eliezer was "passed over" by God to be Abraham's heir, this would be a way for Abraham to give him a great honor.

- (c) What do you think 2 Corinthians 6:14 teaches about *taking oaths*? What are some ways that we can become yoked with unbelievers? How do we *avoid* these?

Taking an oath is often equivalent to making a promise to someone else; making a promise, for example, to tell the truth. However, it is dangerous (biblically speaking) to become entangled with promises to unbelievers; such promises *could* lead to compromising situations or having to compromise one's Christian beliefs. Such entanglements can include such simple things as making business promises (or partnerships) with unbelievers all the way up to more permanent connections (such as a marriage). Avoiding these entanglements requires believers to seek alliances *primarily* with those who have a consistent set of beliefs (i.e. with other believers). In some cases, alliances with unbelievers are unavoidable, but they should be kept to a minimum. Most in-depth relationships with others should be formed with other believers, particularly in situations where the alliance could cause compromise to one's beliefs as a Christian.

Read Genesis 24:10-51

2. (a) List several facts which indicate that the servant was a man of *faith*.

The servant demonstrates that he is a man of faith because 1) he prays to the God of Abraham that he would grant him success (v. 12); 2) he prays *specifically* for a sure sign from God as to whom God has chosen for Isaac (v. 14); 3) he waited for God to assure him that his choice of Rebekah was the correct one (v. 21); 4) he worshiped God for providing him an answer to his prayer (v. 26); 5) he gave credit to God before the family for what had happened (vv. 42ff); and 6) he bowed himself before God in gratitude when the family consented (v. 52).

(b) What do you learn about *prayer* from vv. 12-14? How does this prayer prove James 5:16?

The servant demonstrates a number of truths regarding prayer: 1) he first recognizes who God is; genuine prayer always starts with an acknowledgement of the true nature of God; 2) he was *specific* in his request asking for a specific woman; genuine prayer seeks specific things from God and not just “generalizations” that are immeasurable; 3) he comes humbly before God knowing that *only God* would be able to answer his request; genuine prayer starts with a recognition that anything asked of God must be asked in a spirit of submission. The principle that comes from James 5:16 is that prayer is *powerful*, but only when it is done in accordance with the above stipulations. A believer who genuinely seeks the will of God, putting himself or herself under the sovereign hand of God, and *believes* that God will answer this prayer in accordance with *his purposes* has tapped into a great source of prayer. That source, of course, is the hand of Almighty God, who *uses* prayer to accomplish the great things he has ordained.

(c) How was Rebekah *related* to Abraham? What does this indicate about the *providence* of God?

This verse indicates that Rebekah was Abraham’s grand-niece, born to Bethuel his nephew through Nahor and Milcah. Interesting, that in the *providence* of God, the servant is led directly to the very *family* of Abraham and that a virgin in that family is available *and willing* to come and be Isaac’s wife.

3. (a) How was the servant’s choice *confirmed* by God?

The servant’s choice was *confirmed* by the fact that this woman was the *one* to meet the servant’s criteria when he came to the well, indicating that God had led this woman to this specific meeting.

(b) Why does Laban *initially* run out to see the servant of Abraham (see vv. 29-31)? Why is he *involved* in the decision regarding Rebekah (see v. 50)?

It is likely that Laban felt a responsibility for Rebekah, as her older brother, and went out (initially) to confront the servant. After all, it is highly *presumptuous* for this man to come and select his sister to be the bride of someone unknown. He wishes to protect her honor, and needs to be sure that the intentions of this suitor are righteous. Obviously, then, he stays involved in the decision (with his father) as to the disposition of his sister; as a male leader in the house, he has a responsibility to see his sister into the best possible future.

Read Genesis 24:52-67

4. (a) What evidence can you find from these verses that Rebekah was a woman of *faith*?

Like Abraham, Rebekah is being asked to leave her family and her homeland to travel to a foreign place and be wed to someone that she does not know. But, when asked if she will go, she consents, not really knowing what is to come. The *best* explanation for her willingness must be the hand of God upon her, to give her a sense of trust in the servant (and in God) to go forth into an unknown future.

(b) How is the family *blessing* given to Rebekah in v. 60 eventually fulfilled? How does it accord with the promise made to Isaac by God?

The family sends Rebekah away with the blessing that her marriage to Isaac would be *fruitful*, namely, that she would have children and that they would have children and this would produce a lineage stretching into the future. That, of course, would be an *appropriate* blessing in that particular culture. However, the fulfillment of this blessing would be more *specific*: in accordance with God’s promises to Abraham, Isaac would become the father of a *nation of people*, set aside specifically by God. Thus, this blessing (unbeknownst to the family at the time) was ultimately fulfilled *in the promise of God* through the Israelite people.

- According to vv. 66-67, how does Isaac respond to Rebekah? Why is this significant?

Isaac loves Rebekah. Although the marriage is *arranged*, and although Isaac has never met this girl before, his reaction to her was to love her. The significance of this is the *hand of God* orchestrating the events so perfectly that when this foreign girl is given to Isaac, he has no choice but to fall in love with her. The sovereign hand of God worked out the situation so excellently that the result was Isaac not only finding a wife, but finding a woman that he would love and call his own.

- From Revelation 19:6-9, who is the *bride of Christ*? How does the picture of the servant bringing Rebekah to Isaac parallel that of a bride being brought to Jesus?

The bride of Christ is the *church*, made up of the saints who have been clothed in fine linen and are bright and pure by virtue of their justification by faith and their righteous deeds done in service to the One who has saved them. The marriage supper is the day when the saints are universally and finally brought to Christ, who loves them perfectly as his own bride (i.e. as his own flesh). The servant bringing Rebekah to Isaac is a perfect parallel: just as the servant brought a perfect bride to Isaac for him to love, so God the Holy Spirit brings a perfect bride to Christ for him to love. The will of God is to bring a perfect match to Isaac, and he does the same in bringing a perfect match to Jesus as *his* bride.