

GENESIS 24: THE SEARCH FOR A BRIDE

I. OVERVIEW

- A. Longest chapter in Genesis
 - i. Jam packed with important imagery
- B. Abraham made his senior servant swear an oath to him
 - i. That he will not take a wife for his son Isaac from the Canaanites
 - ii. But he will go back to Abraham's family and find a wife for Isaac there
 - iii. He would be free from his oath if the woman was unwilling to come with him
- C. The servant took ten camels and an assortment of gifts
 - i. And went to Abraham's brother Nahor's city
 - ii. He went to the well in the city in the evening
 - a. When the women went to draw water
 - b. There he asked God for a sign
 - i. He would ask a woman for water
 - ii. The one who offers to water his camels also would be the one for Isaac
- D. Rebekah came to the well
 - i. She was the daughter of Bethuel, son of Milcah, wife of Nahor
 - ii. The servant asked for a drink and she offered to water his camels also
 - a. He gave her gifts and introduced himself as the servant of Abraham
- E. Rebekah's brother Laban came out to the well
 - i. Invited the servant to his house and served him food
 - ii. Then the servant introduced himself and his mission to the family
- F. Laban and Bethuel agreed that the servant's purpose was from God
 - i. He gave the family gifts
 - ii. He spent the night and ate and drank
- G. In the morning, the servant asked to leave
 - i. The family asked him to stay for ten days
 - a. But the servant insisted on leaving
 - ii. So the family asked Rebekah if she would go with the servant and she agreed
 - iii. Her family blessed her and she left with the servant
- H. Isaac now lived in the Negeb

- i. He lifted up his eyes and saw Rebekah coming
- ii. So he took her as his wife

II. REPEATED WORDS IN CHAPTER 24

- A. Many repeated words come in pairs
 - i. Master/servant
 - a. Master – 23 times
 - b. Servant – 16 times
 - ii. Son/daughter
 - a. Son – 16 times
 - b. Daughter – 8 times
 - iii. Woman/man
 - a. Woman – 11 times
 - b. Man – 14 times
 - iv. Father/mother
 - a. Father – 4 times
 - b. Mother – 5 times
 - v. Brother/sister
 - a. Brother – 4 times
 - b. Sister – 4 times
 - vi. Wife – 10 times
- B. Master, servant, son repeated the most
 - i. Gives insight into the main purpose of this story
- C. Wife repeated 10 times
 - i. Emphasizes that this marriage is under God's authority
 - ii. This story represents God looking for a Bride for His Son

III. HIS SERVANT – V.2

- A. Likely Eliezer
 - i. Genesis 15:2 ***But Abram said, “O Lord God, what will you give me, for I continue childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?”***

IV. TO MY KINDRED AND TAKE A WIFE – V. 4

- A. Abraham had just found out that his brother Nahor had children and grandchildren

- i. He waited to find a wife for Isaac until he knew he could find a woman from his own family

V. DO NOT TAKE MY SON BACK THERE – V. 6

- A. God's promises still require obedience
 - i. Abram has partnered with God in a marriage of sorts
 - a. Genesis 12:1 **Now the Lord said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you."**
 - ii. Sending Isaac back would be disobedience
- B. It would be better for Isaac to not have a wife than for him to leave the promised land¹

VI. TO YOUR OFFSPRING I WILL GIVE THIS LAND – V. 7

- A. Abraham repeated the promise to the servant
 - i. So he would remember why it's so important to not take Isaac back to Ur

VII. HE WILL SEND HIS ANGEL BEFORE YOU – V. 7

- A. Abraham had gained confidence in God's promises
 - i. Became basis of faith for future fulfillment

VIII. GRANT ME SUCCESS TODAY – V. 12

- A. Servant asks God for a sign
- B. We need to be careful about learning a lesson from this
 - i. Different spiritual conditions
 - ii. Different culture
 - iii. No biblical precedent
- C. However, God answered his prayer
 - i. What's important is that he trusted God to lead him to the right woman
- D. When is it appropriate to ask God for a sign?
 - i. The servant already had clear instructions from Abraham
 - a. These instructions were given out of obedience to a mandate from God
 - ii. It was not done for personal gain
 - a. It was done for the good of his master and his master's son
 - iii. The servant already knew in general who he was looking for

¹ Guzik, D. (2018). *Study Guide for Genesis 24*. Blue Letter Bible. https://www.blueletterbible.org/comm/guzik_david/study-guide/genesis/genesis-24.cfm

- a. He only needed clarity on the specifics
- iv. The request was improbable but not ridiculous or far-fetched
 - a. It was related to the task at hand
- v. The request was specific
 - a. It left no doubt that God had heard and answered the servant's prayer
- vi. The servant's view of God would not change based on whether or not the sign appears
 - a. He did not ask because of doubt but only to determine success of his mission

IX. I WILL WATER YOUR CAMELS – V. 14

- A. Camels can drink up to 30 gallons of water at once²
 - i. This would take a long time to water ten camels
- B. This is a difficult task for a person but not impossible³
 - i. Ten camels makes it clear that God is involved

X. BY THIS I SHALL KNOW – V. 14

- A. It would only be a woman of strong character who would do this task⁴

XI. BEFORE HE HAD FINISHED SPEAKING – V. 15

- A. Rebekah had already been on her way to the well at that exact moment
- B. She arrived before the servant had finished praying
- C. God had answered his prayer before he ever prayed it
 - i. Matthew 6:8 “*...for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.*”

XII. SHE QUICKLY EMPTIED HER JAR – V. 20

- A. Not only did Rebekah do the work but she did it quickly
- B. God went above and beyond to answer the servant's prayer⁵
 - i. Ephesians 3:20-21 ***Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.***

XIII. GOLD RING AND TWO BRACELETS – V. 22

- A. Constituted a marriage proposal on behalf of Isaac⁶

² Gonzalez, N. (2017, June 23). Do Camels Store Water in Their Humps?. Encyclopedia Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com/story/do-camels-store-water-in-their-humps>

³ Guzik

⁴ Guzik

⁵ Armstrong, S. (2012, March 11). Genesis 2011 - Lesson 24B. Verse By Verse Ministry International. https://versebyverseministry.org/lessons/genesis_2011_lesson_24b

⁶ Armstrong, S. (2012, March 11). Genesis 2011 - Lesson 24B. Verse By Verse Ministry International. https://versebyverseministry.org/lessons/genesis_2011_lesson_24b

- i. She was now betrothed if she accepted

XIV. WORSHIPED THE LORD – V. 26

- A. How quick are we to worship when we recognize God working in our lives?

XV. AS SOON AS HE SAW – V. 30

- A. Laban's eyes were on the riches⁷
 - i. Foreshadows what we learn about him later

XVI. UNTIL I HAVE SAID WHAT I HAVE TO SAY – V. 33

- A. The servant retells the story with all the details
 - i. Emphasizes God's work in the story⁸

XVII. COSTLY ORNAMENTS – V. 53

- A. This was the dowry paid by the family of the bridegroom to the family of the bride
 - i. Shows his ability to provide for his bride

XVIII. REMAIN WITH US A WHILE – V. 55

- A. The world will attempt to keep us from leaving everything behind to follow Jesus
 - i. Luke 9:61-62 ***Yet another said, "I will follow you, Lord, but let me first say farewell to those at my home." Jesus said to him, "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God."***

XIX. DO NOT DELAY ME – V. 56

- A. The servant showed urgency to complete his mission

XX. I WILL GO – V. 58

- A. Immediate response in faith to obey
 - i. Her family tried to delay her
 - a. Just like there will be those who try to delay us from obeying God's word
 - ii. But she heard the servants words and responded with faith to go

XXI. HE LIFTED UP HIS EYES – V. 63

- A. Just like Lot lifted up his eyes
- B. He saw and took just like Eve
 - i. But we already know this is from the Lord
 - a. Rebekah is being compared to a tree of life instead of a tree of knowledge

⁷ Guzik

⁸ Armstrong, S. (2012b, March 18). *Genesis 2011 - Lesson 24C*. Verse By Verse Ministry International.
https://versebyverseministry.org/lessons/genesis_2011_lesson_24c

XXII. VEIL – V. 65

- A. Betrothal or preparation for marriage
 - i. Implicit is the idea that she removed it once she entered Isaac's tent
- B. Israel was separated from God by a veil under the law
 - i. The veil doesn't separate God from us
 - a. It hides our beauty until it is ready to be revealed
 - i. Revelation 19:7 ***Let us rejoice and exult and give him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready...***
 - ii. The law was the betrothal
 - iii. The veil was removed at Jesus' death

XXIII. POINTS TO JESUS

- A. The servant was looking for a room to spend the night when he met Rebekah
 - i. She was the mother of Israel
 - ii. Mary and Joseph were looking for a room to spend the night
 - a. Mary was the mother of Jesus
- B. Abraham sent his servant to look for a wife for his son
 - i. Jesus tells the parable of the king who sent his servants to invite people to the wedding feast
 - a. The servants were the OT prophets
 - ii. Some say the servant represents the Holy Spirit
- C. Parallels to God's long term plan
 - i. Abraham sends his servant to look for a bride for his son
 - a. God sent His prophets to look for a Bride for His Son
 - ii. Abraham's son was considered dead and resurrected
 - a. God's Son Jesus died and was resurrected
 - iii. Abraham had given his son all things – v. 36
 - a. God has given His Son Jesus all things
 - i. John 13:3 ***Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going back to God...***
 - iv. The servant went to the east (Mesopotamia) to bring a bride back with him
 - a. Jesus went into the world to bring a Bride back with Him
 - v. The servant found a bride and gave her riches and gifts

- a. Jesus gave His bride the Holy Spirit
 - i. Ephesians 1:13-14 ***In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.***
- vi. The bride returned with the servant to the promised country
 - a. Jesus' Bride is called out of the world into the kingdom
- vii. There she met her bridegroom
 - a. One day we will meet our Bridegroom
- viii. She was loved by her husband
 - a. We will belong to Jesus forever
- D. Jesus met a woman at a well in John 4
 - i. She was a Samaritan – Gentile
 - a. Instead of being from the family of Abraham
 - ii. She had been married five times and now was with a man who was not her husband
 - a. Instead of being a virgin
 - iii. Jesus asked her for a drink of water and she was surprised because of her ethnicity
 - a. Instead of immediately offering to give him a drink
 - iv. Jesus offered her living water
 - a. Instead of her offering Him water
 - v. She went back to her town to tell them the news
 - a. Just like Rebekah went back to her family to tell them the news
 - vi. The townspeople asked Jesus to stay and He did
 - a. Rebekah's family asked the servant to stay but he refused
 - vii. The Samaritans were being offered to join into the family of Abraham
 - a. Instead of the servant coming on behalf of the Son, the Son Himself came

XXIV. QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

- A. Why did Abraham refuse to allow Isaac to marry a Canaanite woman? What can we learn from this regarding our own relationship to the world around us? See 2 Corinthians 6:14.

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- B. What role does obedience play in seeing God's promises be fulfilled? What promises has God invited you to take part in through obedience?

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- C. How does our history with God strengthen our faith and trust in what God will do in the future?

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- D. Have you ever asked God for a sign? What is the most reliable sign that we have already been given?

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- E. How does knowing that God already knows our needs change the way you pray?

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- F. What was so unique about Rebekah's response to the servant? How does this parallel our response to God's word?
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- G. Do you ever feel the world trying to pull you back to its practices? How can we resist that temptation?

- H. Do you look forward to the day when you will see Jesus face to face? What thoughts or feelings come to mind when you think of that day?

XXV. FURTHER STUDY

- A. What other language does the author use in this chapter to compare Rebekah to a tree of life? Why is this significant?

- B. What are some ways that Rebekah parallels the Church? See Ephesians 1:3-4; Ephesians 3:10-11; John 17:22-23.

- C. Isaac was the first of three men in the Old Testament to find their wives at a well. Who were the other two?

- D. Why are wells so significant in the Bible, especially in regards to betrothal and marriage?
What do wells point to?

- E. Read the story of Gideon in Judges 6. Was it right for him to ask for a sign? Why or why not?

- F. Read Matthew 16:1-4. Why did the Pharisees ask for a sign? Why did Jesus respond the way He did?

- G. What does Rebekah's veil represent? What does this mean for both Israel and the Church?
See Exodus 26: 31-33; Matthew 27:50-51; 2 Corinthians 3:12-18.
