

Genesis 23 – 24 Bible Study

This week we are looking at a big chunk of Genesis. We won't be able to dive into everything, but we will hit the highlights. We will see the death of Sarah and Abraham's search for a wife for Isaac.

Take a look at Genesis 23. *When Sarah dies what does Abraham ask of the people of Canaan? (see verse 23:4)*

How do the people respond? (see verse 6)

In verses 7 – 16 we see an interesting negotiation between Abraham and Ephron. *Why do you suspect that Abraham insists on paying for the tomb and the land rather than just accepting it as a gift?*

Up until this point, Abraham is only a sojourner in the promised land. *How does this change now that he owns some of it?*

Genesis 24

In Genesis 24 we see the family of God growing as Abraham searches for a wife for Isaac. He calls on his oldest servant, whom you will remember from before the birth of Isaac. This is presumably Eliezer, whom Abraham offered up as an acceptable heir when he had yet to have a son. Keeping in mind that the Old Testament is constantly seen as preparation for the coming of Christ, we should look at this chapter through the lens of the Messiah and His church.

In this chapter we see father Abraham going after a bride for his son. This motif of bride and groom and the father sending his servant to find the bride parallels the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit in the New Testament. *What similarities do you notice between this story and the gospel? (for a little help, look at the verses below)*

“No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up at the last day.” (John 6:44, NET)

“For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy, because I promised you in marriage to one husband, to present you as a pure virgin to Christ.” (2 Corinthians 11:2, NET)

“Husbands, love your wives just as Christ loved the church and gave himself for her to sanctify her by cleansing her with the washing of the water by the word, so that he may present the church to himself as glorious—not having a stain or wrinkle, or any such blemish, but holy and blameless.” (Ephesians 5:25–27, NET)

So, the servant goes to bring back a bride for the son, in the way that the Holy Spirit goes to prepare the church to be the bride of Christ. *In verse 24:10 what do we see the servant taking with him?*

We could see these gifts from the servant as a small portion of the master’s possessions, a kind of deposit offered to the family for the bride. *How does this parallel the gifts that the Spirit brings the church? (see the following verse)*

The Holy Spirit “who is the down payment of our inheritance, until the redemption of God’s own possession, to the praise of his glory.” (Ephesians 1:14, NET)

Notice how many times from verse 34 – 50 the servant mentions his master and/or his master’s son. *Why do you think he would repeat these words so much?*

In verse 33 the servant refuses to eat until he does what he was sent to do. *In what way does this give us an image of a servant of God?*

We see Jesus as serving the Lord in John 4:34, “*Jesus said to them, “My food is to do the will of the one who sent me and to complete his work.”* (John 4:34, NET)

Many times, we put our physical needs ahead of the spiritual. This servant serves as an example to us of carrying out our master’s will. *What things do you notice about his priorities?* (see verses 12, 17, 21, 26, 27, 33, 48, 52, 56)

What things do we learn about the nature, or attributes of God, from the servant in verse 27?

What do we learn of the servant’s will here?

In verse 66, we see the servant giving Isaac an account of all that he had done. *How does this parallel the life of faith?*

Perhaps this verse is a good parallel: *“I tell you that on the day of judgment, people will give an account for every worthless word they speak. For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.”* (Matthew 12:36–37, NET)

If we look at Rebekah as a symbol of the church receiving the good news from the servant about the bridegroom, what do we learn about the life of faith? Let’s take a look at her responses in the following verses.

What do you notice about her in verses 18-20?

In verse 25?

In verses 28 how might this be seen as a symbol of someone who has just been told the good news?

And in verse 58, what does her response reveal about the life of faith?

The world often tells the one who is hearing about God for the first time to wait, to think about it, to not be hasty. In this interaction perhaps Laban serves as a “voice of reason” in the head of Rebekah, when he urges her to stay for 10 days before she goes. Notice, though, how he doesn’t put the brakes on getting all the goodies the servant brought in verses 30-31.

Even though Rebekah has no idea who Isaac is, what he looks like, is like, or if she will like him her response is immediate. She will go. To the modern woman this idea might sound horrible, but biblical traditions aside, this response reminds us of something we know about loving someone we have not seen. Take a look at 1 Peter 1:8, *“You have not seen him, but you love him. You do not see him now but you believe in him, and so you rejoice with an indescribable and glorious joy.”*

Maybe this archaic way of meeting and marrying is meant to speak to the part of us that loves a God we have not seen, but whom we have met through His Holy Spirit, and through whom we have been the recipient of His glorious gifts. When we look at the Old Testament as a preparation for the coming of Christ, we see it's stories and it's scenes in a new light that only serves to enlighten our souls and remind us that God has been preparing the bride for Himself since the first pages of Genesis.

Do you remember where Isaac was the last time we saw him? He was on Mount Moriah with his father and the wood for the sacrifice. In verse 19 we only see Abraham returning from the Mount of sacrifice: “Then Abraham returned to his servants, and they set out together for Beer Sheba where Abraham stayed.” (Genesis 22:19, NET) This is consistent then, with Isaac being the image of Christ who went to Calvary to die for us and now waits for us to come to him in heaven.

What do we see Isaac doing when Eliezer and Rebekah return? (see verse 63-64)

Isaac is joyful when Rebekah becomes his wife, and we learn that he loved her (verse 67). Even though this is a true story of the line of

the Jewish nation, it is also a beautiful foreshadowing of the bridegroom taking his bride, the church, and loving her for eternity.

“Let us rejoice and exult and give him glory, because the wedding celebration of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready. She was permitted to be dressed in bright, clean, fine linen” (for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints). Then the angel said to me, “Write the following: Blessed are those who are invited to the banquet at the wedding celebration of the Lamb!” He also said to me, “These are the true words of God.”” (Revelation 19:7–9, NET)