

Lesson 11 A WIFE FOR ISAAC

READING: Genesis 24; Deut. 7:3-4; II Cor. 6:14

AIM: To show how God guides the faithful and to understand the importance of wise marriage.

1. BACKGROUND

After Sarah's death at the age of 127 years, Abraham and Isaac lived for three years in the old encampment under the oaks of Mamre at Hebron. Abraham was getting old and thought that he must soon die. His son Isaac was now 40 years old, but as yet unmarried.

Abraham's wisdom as a father was of that righteous quality, known and commanded by the Lord:

“For I (the Lord) know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgement; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him” (Gen. 18:19).

It was important that Isaac should marry and have children if the promise which was centred in the seed of Abraham should be fulfilled. Genesis 24 reveals the anxious care of Abraham (in his old age) that Isaac should have a suitable wife.

Contrast this wise attitude with that of the “sons of God” in Noah's day who took wives of the heathen among whom they lived, because they were beautiful. The wise man wrote in Proverbs 31:30, **“Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain; but a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised”**.

2. ELIEZER'S MISSION Gen. 24:1-14

Eliezer was Abraham's chief servant (Gen. 15:2) and presumably he was the one to whom Abraham gave the task of finding a wife for Isaac. He made a contract with Eliezer in which he sternly forbade him to take Isaac out of the Land of Promise, in which he should remain as a stranger and pilgrim. Eliezer must go to Abraham's relatives left behind in Haran who had accompanied Abraham from Ur.

Abraham knew what disaster an unwise marriage would bring and therefore warned Eliezer against the “daughters of the Canaanites”, lest Isaac be turned from God and His ways. The Canaanites were a wicked and idolatrous people who had been cursed by God (Gen. 9:25-27 15:16).

Abraham gave Eliezer an assurance in his difficult task of journeying to a distant land and there persuading a wife for Isaac to return with him, that **“He (the Lord God) shall send His angel before thee and thou shalt take a wife unto my son from thence”**.

The Lord is always ready to assist those who are faithful (although we must realise that help is not always in the form we might expect or desire). So Eliezer departed with ten camels loaded with food and presents and came to a well of water outside the city of Nahor in Mesopotamia (ie the city where Nahor lived – probably Haran).

Eliezer, being a man of faith, asked God for a sign by which he should select the wife for Isaac. Eliezer's prayer was answered. Rebekah was made known to Eliezer, who explained to her what Abraham desired.

3. **ISAAC'S WIFE, REBEKAH** - Gen. 24:15-17

Rebekah was a grand-niece of Abraham. She took Eliezer to her father Bethuel's house where he told his purpose to the household. Rebekah expressed her willingness to go and Laban, her elder brother, and the others agreed that **"the thing proceedeth from the Lord"**.

Thus Rebekah came into the land of Canaan and met Isaac (following the custom of her day by covering her face with a veil). Marriages in those days were not arranged as they are in our country today. Often the bride and bridegroom did not see each other before the marriage and had no say in the choice of their partner. Everything was arranged by the parents and as it was the custom, was readily accepted. We see how well it worked out in the case of Isaac and his bride when God guided the arrangements of faithful people.

Rebekah was all that the servant could have hoped for (Gen. 24:15-16, 18-20, 24, 58, 65-67);

She appeared as his prayer was finished and fulfilled the sign by giving him water to drink and offering to draw more for the camels.

She was a daughter of Abraham's kindred.

She was beautiful and also a virgin.

She was willing to leave her family and travel to the Land of Promise to become Isaac's wife.

She was modest and became a good wife to Isaac.

4. **THE IMPORTANCE OF WISE MARRIAGE** - ii Cor. 6:14; Deut 7:3-4

The care and trouble that Abraham undertook to obtain a good wife for Isaac demonstrates the importance of a wise marriage. The contract of marriage is binding for a whole lifetime so it is essential that husband and wife should have the same belief, otherwise the home will soon become divided and the worship of God hindered or neglected.

Abraham was not prepared to let Isaac marry an unbeliever. The emphasis was on the choice of a person who was willing to accept God and come to Him so that husband and wife could help each other in His service together. For marriage was so created by God that each part might help towards the needs of the other (Gen. 2:20).

Love based on the Gospel is a very enriching experience and concerning this the wise man wrote in Prov. 18:22 and Prov. 31:10-31. Material possessions perish with age but the spiritual riches gained by a husband and wife through a godly life together are imperishable.

5. **ABRAHAM – FATHER OF THE FAITHFUL** - Rom. 4:16

In all this Abraham's faithfulness is again evident and the over-ruling providence of God is shown in the guidance of events to achieve the end in view. Abraham had been called from idolatry in Ur of the Chaldees to serve the true God. His was a life of separation. Abraham desired his son likewise to be separated from surrounding idolatry.

Abraham continued to live many years after the marriage of Isaac and Rebekah, and did not die until Jacob, the son of Isaac was about 14 years of age (Heb. 11:0). Abraham would have helped teach Jacob about God and no doubt Abraham's experiences would have a considerable impact on the life of Jacob.

Isaac never left the Land of Promise; even in times of drought and famine, he remained there (Gen. 26:1-2). Throughout his life he formed no attachments with Canaanitish women. To him, **God repeated the same momentous promises He had made to Abraham** (Gen. 26: 3-5). Like Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah had no seed until God intervened.

Though he was often afflicted by the people of the land (as foretold in Gen. 15:13) and sometimes found himself in the midst of strife and contention with them, Isaac continued to worship God faithfully. He steadfastly looked forward to the time when all such bitterness will cease, and the peaceful time that God had promised will be revealed in the earth.

6. CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Throughout the Bible, marriage, which God instituted when He created man and woman, has a deep spiritual significance. The marriage contract between husband and wife is likened to the contract between Jesus Christ and the ecclesia of God. The **ecclesia**, comprising many faithful servants, is the **“bride”** who is to be united with Jesus Christ, the **“bridegroom”**, when he returns to the earth. (Rev. 19:7-9).

For the spiritual marriage to be successful, each servant must now prepare by following Jesus' example and becoming at one with him in thought and action. We must heed the wisdom of faithful Abraham and the example of Isaac and Rebekah and select our friends and partners in life from those who belong to the family of God. We dare not risk being led away from the ways of God by those who do not believe in Him (II Cor. 6:14).

THE PROMISES MADE TO ABRAHAM STRETCH AS A CHAIN THROUGHOUT THE BIBLE

- See Gen. 12:1-3; 13:14-17; 15:4-6; 17:1-8; 22:16-18.
- Renewed to Isaac (Gen. 26:3-4) and to Jacob (Gen. 28:13-14)
- Proclaimed to Moses (Exod. 6:3, 4, 8; Deut 34:1-4) and David (I Chron 16:15-18).
- Fulfilment predicted by the prophets (Isa. 29:22-23; Jer. 33:25-26; Micah 7:20)
- Confirmed by Christ (Luke 1:68-74; Rom. 15:8) and believed in by the Apostles (Acts 3:25-26; 7:2-5; 26:6-8; Gal 3:8; II Pet 1:4)
- To be fulfilled at Christ's second coming (Matt. 8:11; Luke 13:28-29)

REFERENCE LIBRARY

- “The Ways of Providence”, chapters 3 and 4
- “Abraham”, chapters 21 to 23
- “Scriptural Coincidences: part 1, chapters 3 and 4
- “Christian Marriage”.

QUESTIONS

1. How did God guide the choice of a wife for Isaac?
2. Why is it important to consider God's commandments when choosing a life partner?
3. What qualities did Rebekah possess to make her a suitable wife for Isaac?
4. How did Abraham show wisdom in seeking a wife for his son Isaac?