

JANUARY 10

Genesis 24

Genesis 24 tells the story of how Isaac got his wife. There are a few things about this chapter I want to point out to you.

The servant Abraham sent back to Aram-na-haraim to the city of Nahor, Abraham's brother, is unnamed in the account, but almost certainly it was Eliezer of Damascus. The description of him in verse 2 makes that fairly certain. This was the same Eliezer whom Abraham had once tried to make his heir. Every time I read this chapter, I am impressed with the characteristics of the faithful steward who had charge of everything that Abraham owned. Since I too am a steward (as according to Jesus all of us are) it is worth looking at this man as a model for ourselves. He is a man of piety and faith, he trusts God completely, and looks to Him for guidance and direction (v.12). He worships God in the middle of the task (v.26) and gives thanks to God at the successful conclusion of the mission (v.52). He is eminently dependable - Abraham trusts him with everything he owns and trust is the very reason that he sends this man on the most important mission he can imagine to find the wife through which the promised seed of Isaac will be born. He is absolutely devoted to his master - you can see it in the prayer of v.12, "*O God help me succeed for the sake of my master Abraham,*" and again in his conversation with Laban. This servant is also obsessed with a sense of urgency about the importance of his mission - he won't eat until he has delivered his message and he doesn't want to lose even a day in returning to Abraham to report his final success. As I look at myself as a servant of God, I want to be like Eliezer of Damascus.

There is one last thing in this chapter that we must not miss and it is an important principle that is just as imperative for us as it was for Isaac. Abraham is adamant that his son must marry only with the people of God. Now even Abraham's relatives, the relations of Nahor, were not entirely free from idolatry, but these people at least worshipped the Lord and they were the only ones in that day who did. This theme of marrying only within the people God is woven throughout the entire fabric of God's Word:

In Deut. 7:3,17, it is made a matter of law - "*you must not intermarry,*" Moses tells his people, "*with the pagan nations, for they will turn your sons away from following me...*"

In I Kings 11:4, it is the voice of experience - "*And it came about that when Solomon was old his wives turned his heart away from God after other gods and his heart was not wholly devoted to the Lord his God as the heart of David his father had been.*"

In Ezra 9, it is the voice of contrition - "*They have taken some of their daughters as wives for themselves and for their sons so that the holy race has intermingled with the people of the lands...and when I heard about this matter*" says Ezra, "*I tore my garments and my robe...and sat down appalled.*"

In I Cor. 7:39, Paul explicitly commands Christians only to marry other Christians.

It is important to note here that this command is not racially based, but based upon spiritual convictions. Many have misused this kind of scripture over the years to teach that marriages between races is immoral. This is simply not true. One great example is that of Rahab, the Canaanite, who married Salmon, an Israelite and eventually was a part of the Bloodline of Jesus.

It is, however, imperative for Isaac and for us, that we marry people whose lives are also wrapped around the worship of the real God of the universe. For the seed of Abraham, everything depended on this command being kept, and it is no less important for the children of the covenant today.

Rebekah was also a virgin. This is one mark of strong character and conviction. Beyond that, she was a woman who had a strong work ethic and was willing to go far beyond the call of duty in serving a stranger. Watering a man's camels was not a simple task, yet Rebekah volunteers for it – exactly as the servant prayed.

Are you a single person looking for a spouse? Pray for God to lead you to the right kind of person. Go to 'a land' where you might find him or her – a local church is the best place to build friendships with like minded people. Never settle for someone who is not a believer. And aspire to marry someone with excellent character who will love you for a lifetime.

Well that is plenty for today. This is Mark Ashton reminding you that God's word is a lamp to your feet and a light to your path. Peace be with you.