

Bi121 Old Testament

Lesson Bi121-11 Isaac's Family (Genesis 24-25)

How old is old? If you are a child, 21 seems old and 30 is ancient! The oldest people living today are less than 120 years old. Abraham's wife Sarah lived 127 years and then she died. Abraham bought a field and a cave in his new homeland and tenderly buried her there.

Isaac was deeply moved at the death of his mother and mourned for her many days. Abraham realized that he needed to find a wife for his 40-year-old son Isaac, because he is the son through whom the promised Messiah will come. Abraham was afraid that Isaac might marry one of the pagan Canaanite women living nearby. So Abraham decided to send his chief servant back to his homeland to find a wife for Isaac from among his own relatives, his own clan. Abraham made the servant swear an oath that he would surely bring back a wife for Isaac from members of his family. "The same God who brought me here and gave me this land will send his angel before you. He will prepare the way for you and direct you." Abraham said as he blessed his servant.

The servant took 10 camels, laden with all kinds of gifts for the family of Isaac's future wife. After many days of walking, the servant reached the town in Mesopotamia where Abraham's family lived. He stopped at a spring on the edge of town and prayed, "Oh God, show kindness to my master Abraham and help me find the right woman for Isaac." Then he had an idea and added to his prayer. "Lord, I will ask one of these young women for a drink of water. I will know she is the right one if she not only gives me a drink, and also offers to draw water for all 10 of my thirsty camels too!"

Before he even finished praying, a young woman named Rebekah came to the spring. She was unusually beautiful. She filled her jar and turned to go. But the servant stopped her saying, "Please would you mind giving me a little water from your jar?"

"Drink, my lord," she said. "I'll draw water for your camels too, until they have had enough to drink." The servant's hearted leapt with rejoicing and praising God as she drew the water. He knew God had answered his prayer. "She's the one!" He thought.

Pulling out a gold nose ring and two gold bracelets and giving them to Rebekah, he asked, "Whose daughter are you? Is there room in your father's house for us to spend the night?" Then he learned that she was actually the granddaughter of Abraham's brother Nahor!

Once they got to the house, the servant told the family about his assignment. "I am Abraham's servant and the Lord has blessed my master abundantly. His wife Sarah bore him a son in her old age and he has given him everything he owns. He made me swear an oath to come here and get a wife for his son. When I arrived at the spring, I prayed and asked God for a sign. I asked that she would be willing to give me a drink of water and also draw water for all the camels. Rebekah did exactly that. I believe she is the woman God has chosen to be Isaac's wife."

“This is from the Lord.” They said to one another. “Take Rebekah and let her become the wife of your master’s son, as the Lord has directed.”

At this the servant brought out more gifts for Rebekah, gold and silver jewelry and beautiful clothing, as well as other costly gifts for her brother and her mother.

The next morning the family wanted to make sure that Rebekah was willing to go and marry Abraham's son. Although this was to be an arranged marriage as was common in their culture, they wanted to give Rebekah the opportunity to decide where she would go or not. “Will you go with this man?” They asked.

“I will go.” She replied.

And thus just as Abraham had left his country believing God, so did Rebekah. Her family blessed Rebekah and sent her and her maidservants away with Abraham's servant. They would have hundreds of miles of traveling before she would meet the man she had agreed to marry.

Isaac was meditating in the fields near his home one evening when he saw camels approaching. He decided to walk out to greet the small caravan. Rebekah saw Isaac coming their way. “Who is this handsome man coming towards us?” she asked the servant. “It is my master's son, Isaac.” He answered so she covered herself with a veil. Then the servant told Isaac all that God had done and presented Rebekah to him. So Isaac took Rebekah to be his wife and he loved her. And Isaac was comforted from the death of his mother.

Now Abraham married another woman named Keturah. She bore to him other sons, but before he died he gave gifts to his other sons but left his great wealth to Isaac. When he died at 175 years of age, both Isaac and Ishmael buried him next to Sarah in the cave he had bought from the Hittites.

For 20 years Rebekah was barren and had no child. Isaac prayed for her and she became pregnant with twins. The Lord told her before their birth, “Two nations are in your womb, one will be stronger than the other, and the older will serve the younger.” When they were born, the first son to come out was red and hairy. They called him Esau, which means “hairy one”. The second son, born holding on to his brother’s heel, they named Jacob, which means “heel-catcher” or “deceiver.”

As the boys grew, Esau became a skilled hunter, enjoying life in the open country, while Jacob enjoyed staying at home. Isaac loved Esau and the wild game he provided, while Rebekah favored Jacob and his help. One day Jacob was cooking some red stew, when Esau arrived from the open country. He was very hungry and asked Jacob for some stew. Jacob said, “First sell me your birthright as the first son.”

“I am about to die, what good is the birthright to me?” He said.

Jacob replied, “Swear you are selling me today your birthright, in exchange for the food!” and he did. Then Jacob gave him some bread and lentil stew. Esau ate and drank, then left. Esau showed he counted his place as the firstborn son as nothing.

This story is important because it illustrates how differently people of the same family can view God’s promises. By faith Abraham sent the servant to find a wife for Isaac. Both the servant and Rebekah believed in God’s direction. Isaac knew the promise of God concerning Jacob and Esau. The twins both knew God’s plan but chose instead to trust their own abilities. Only later in life did Jacob truly believe God. We see that the promises of God are gained through faith by all who will believe, just as Abraham believed.

The main truth of this story is that God will accomplish his plan through the people who receive and accept His promises by faith.

To review this lesson, answer these questions.

1. Why did Abraham send his servant back to his family?
 - a. [Pause for 6 seconds.] If you said, “to find a wife for his son Isaac, because he was the promised son,” you are correct.
2. How would the servant know which woman to bring back as a wife for Isaac?
 - a. [Pause for 6 seconds.] If you said, “I will know she is the right one if she gives me a drink, and then offers to draw water for all ten of my camels!” you are correct.
3. What did God say to Rebekah about the twins in her womb?
 - a. [Pause for 6 seconds.] If you said, “Two nations are in your womb, one will be stronger than the other, and the older will serve the younger,” you are correct.

Your assignment for this lesson is to listen to the story at least three times. As you hear the story each time, imagine how it happened; see the events in your mind. Then tell the story in your own words as you remember it. Then listen to the story again and retell it until you feel sure you are repeating the circumstances and actions correctly. You should spend at least 45 minutes learning the story. You may need to have someone check that you are telling the story correctly.

Tell the story to a friend who has never heard this story. Then consider this question. Neither Abraham nor Jacob were the firstborn of their mothers, yet God called each to be a part of the special lineage that would lead to Christ. What is the quality that God really seeks in people? He seeks people who place their faith in God.