

The Plan from the Beginning
Daily Bible Reading Plan
Class Notes for Week 6: Genesis Chapters 23-26

For this week's class, there are at least spiritual lessons we can learn from our reading:

1. We are strangers in a strange land. We should expect to be treated differently. We should also ensure that we do not place the things we cherish in the care of that world.
2. When we ask the Lord to show us something or provide for us through prayer, we should be humble and recognize the welfare of others before our own.
3. Our birthright as Christians was paid for by the blood of Christ and should not be spurned or traded away for the worthless pursuits of wealth, pride, fame or sensual desire.

I. Genesis 23: Death and burial of Sarah

- Sarah passes away at the age of 127. Isaac would be about 37 at this time.
- Abraham attempts to purchase a plot of land to bury Sarah in. It is a sobering reality that the Lord's promise of inheriting the land has yet to come to fruition. He is still a resident alien in the land where he lives.
- He settles on a cave that he wants to purchase. It is owned by a man named Ephron, who at first wants to simply allow Abraham to bury his dead there at no charge. Why do you think Abraham is resistant to the seemingly charitable offer?
- Abraham insists on paying for the land and owning it outright. Ephron finally puts forth a price of 400 shekels of silver. A shekel is about one-half ounce, so this would be equivalent to just over 200 oz. (12.5 lbs.) of silver, about \$7,000 in today's market. This seems like a high price, considering the contemporary Code of Hammurabi, in force in Babylonia at this time, set the wage of a working man at about 10-12 shekels a year. The annual Temple tax, set over 400 years later in Leviticus 27:3, is 50 shekels of silver for adult males. Why is the price so high when just before this, Ephron wanted to allow Abraham to bury Sarah for free?

II. Genesis 24: A bride for Isaac

- This long chapter can be broken up into 4 smaller areas of focus:
 - I. Sending out of the servant
 - Abraham sends his senior servant (unnamed, but assumed to be Eliazer) on a mission to find a bride for Isaac. It is interesting that the Bible tells us that this servant was in charge of all Abraham owned. It is curious as to why Isaac was not, if his father was too old to run things. Perhaps Isaac was still in training to run the "family business" and not yet ready.
 - He makes this servant take an oath that the servant will go to his homeland (Ur or Haran?) and get a wife for Isaac from Abraham's kinfolk. Living in Canaan among idolatrous people has shown Abraham that he does not need to bond his son to one of them.
 - Why does he insist that the servant not take Isaac?
 - Abraham does give reassurance to the servant that the angel of the Lord will go before him and that if no woman will come back and marry Isaac, the servant is free from his oath.
 - II. The servant's unselfish and humble prayer
 - The servant takes 10 camels with him on his journey, laden with provisions and goods from his master.
 - In verses 12-14, the servant utters a very humble and unselfish prayer. He desires that the Lord allow him to know the woman to select by a particular sign. He wants to succeed in the mission out of respect and veneration of his master, Abraham. It is indicative of the fact that Abraham had highly honorable character and has respected by those under his charge.
 - III. The Lord provides a wife for Isaac
 - Rebekah (Abraham's great-niece through his brother Nahor's son) comes on the scene and exhibits great courtesy and hospitality. She is a very attractive woman. She carries out the duties that the servant prayed for.
 - The servant bestows gifts upon Rebekah and learns of whose family she is from. The servant had to have been elated and praises God in verses 26 and 27.

- The servant goes with Rebekah back to her family and meets her brother Laban, father Bethuel and her mother. The servant informs her family about the oath, to whom he made it, his prayer and the answer from God.
 - In verse 51, they tell him to take Rebekah home with him to marry Isaac. The servant gives the equivalent of a dowry payment from the goods he brought with him. It is interesting that in verse 55, they change their minds and ask that he tarry 10 more days. Why?
- IV. Rebekah meets and marries Isaac
- We see in verses 62-67 that Isaac is in the field when the servant draws near to him with his future bride. Rebekah sees Isaac and inquires as to who he is. Interestingly, the servant replies that the man is his master, whereas before he describes Isaac as “my master’s son”.
 - Rebekah dismounts her camel and covers her face. The servant informs Isaac of all that has taken place (does not first tell Abraham?). Isaac takes Rebekah as his wife, to live in the tent of his departed mother. The gift of a wife given to him by the Lord is a comfort to him after losing his mother.

V. **Genesis 25: Abraham dies/Jacob and Esau are born**

- Abraham marries again (Keturah) and produces 6 children with her. Abraham gives the descendants of his concubines (Hagar and Keturah-I Chronicles 1:32?) gifts while he is alive, but upon his death, all went to Isaac.
- Abraham dies at the age of 175, 100 years after leaving Haran. He is buried by his first two children, Ishmael and Isaac in the cave at Machpelah next to Sarah.
- In verses 19-26, we see the birth of Jacob and Esau. They are born to Isaac and Rebekah after she has been barren 20 years. The two children struggle in her womb (a portent of things to come) and she seeks a reason from God. Verse 23 is the answer.
- The children are born and named appropriately: Esau (Heb. “hairy”) and Jacob (Heb. “heel catcher”).
- Verses 27-34 detail that Esau, a man of the field and skilled hunter (Isaac in field when Rebekah arrives), is Isaac’s favorite son, while Jacob, a peaceful man who stayed in the tents, was Rebekah’s favorite.
- Esau, an obviously foolish and impulsive man in his youth, sells his birthright as first born to Jacob for what seems to be a measly sum: a bowl of stew. This may show that although Esau was his father’s favorite, Esau had little regard for the importance of his own heritage.