

STUDY TEN — GENESIS 24
GOD'S KINDNESS

P R O M I S E

— G E N E S I S 12 - 25 —

GOD'S GRACIOUS INITIATIVE
IN THE LIFE & TIMES OF ABRAHAM

OVERVIEW

Genesis 24:1-9 – In faith, Abraham pursues God’s promise of descendants by seeking out a wife for his son. He does so by means of his senior servant (Eliezer of Damascus in 15:2?), for he has already learned how ill-advised it is to personally leave the land God had promised to him. He thus makes his servant swear that he will not cause Isaac to leave the land either. The placement of the servant’s hand so close to his procreative organs (cf. 47:29), signals the purpose of the mission and God’s promise of a seed/offspring.

Abraham’s instruction for Isaac not to marry a Canaanite woman is likely tied to God’s judgement upon the godlessness of Canaan (15:16; cf. 9:25). Abraham thus prizes not ethnicity, but Godly character arising from faith (which we shall soon see evident in Rebekah and her family’s response to the servant). Given the events of Gen 22, Abraham is confident in the Lord’s provision of a bride.

Genesis 24:10-27 – Aram Naharaim was located in the transitional zone between Mesopotamia and Syria and would have taken several months to reach. Upon arrival, the servant wisely prays for God’s guidance in revealing a woman of noble character. This was no arbitrary test (cf. Judges 6:36-40) but a prayer that would God reveal a suitable bride as she met the criteria of a generous and hospitable spirit. Duguid writes of the servant, ‘He didn’t ask for a miraculous sign from God. Instead, he sought supernatural guidance in the way it so often comes, through the ordinary events of life.’ (p 164).

Indeed, God’s providence shines in Genesis 24 as we see him orchestrating the ordinary events of life to bring about his purposes, for before the servant even finishes praying, Rebekah appears (v. 15 – meaning she probably left her dwelling *before* the servant even begun praying!) Of her impressive response, Hughes writes (p 318)

‘...the ancient well was a large, deep hole in the earth with steps leading down to the spring water – so that each drawing of water required substantial effort. And more, a camel typically would drink about twenty-five gallons of water, and an ancient water jar held about three gallons of water. This means that Rebekah made between eighty and one hundred descents into the well.’

The process would have taken 1-1.5 hours! Rebekah was certainly a woman of gumption, generosity and hospitality! Her family connection to Abraham confirms her as the Lord’s choice and causes the servant to rejoice at God’s kindness to Abraham.

Genesis 24:28-67 – Rebekah’s suitability is most clearly confirmed by her Abraham-like faith that is ready to leave her homeland in response to the revelation of God (24:58). She went by faith.

PROMISE+FULFILMENT

AT THE WELL

Type-Scenes are a literary device whereby a familiar set of circumstances are used to build expectations as to what will transpire, or to signal the significance of an event.

Type-scenes are prevalent in Biblical narrative. In fact, one recurrent type-scene is the meeting of a man and a woman at a well which serves as a precursor to marriage – e.g. Isaac/Rebekah, Jacob/Rachel, Moses/Zipporah.

It is therefore surprising in Jesus’ day to find him speaking with a woman at a well in Samaria (John 4:27), Jacob’s well no less!

Yet far from signalling impending nuptials, Jesus’ invites the woman into a much more significant and intimate relationship than marriage, Jesus invites her into a relationship with God himself.

Indeed, ‘*Jesus invites all of us into a spiritual marriage with him, one that will culminate in the “marriage supper of the lamb” (Rev 19:1-10).*’ (Longman, 322).

Even the most idyllic marriages (e.g. the sunset/fairytale ending of Genesis 24) are but a faint picture of what God offers *all* of us eternally in Christ.

Indeed, perhaps one further parallel with the gospel can be seen between the selfless senior servant who prepares the way for the bridegroom and John the Baptist who did the same for Christ (cf. John 3:29-30; Hughes, 317).

GETTING STARTED

1. Has there been an instance when you felt overwhelmed with a sense of God's kindness?

INTO THE TEXT

Read Genesis 24:1-9

2. Why was Abraham adamant that Isaac not return to his ancestral homeland?
3. Why might Abraham not have wanted Isaac to marry a Canaanite? (cf. 9:25; 15:16)
4. How is the maturity of Abraham's faith evident in this passage?

Read Genesis 24:10-27

5. What do you think was the reasoning behind the servant's prayer in verse 14?
6. Read Romans 8:28. What is God's providence and how do we see it demonstrated here?
7. Read Proverbs 3:5-6. How is the servant's example instructive for us as we seek God's guidance in our day to day lives?

Read Genesis 24:28-67

8. How does Rebekah demonstrate herself to be a fitting choice for Isaac?
9. *'There would undoubtedly be differences between Isaac and Rebekah that would have to be overcome. Certainly they would travel down some difficult paths together. But they had at their disposal the means of overcoming those difficulties because their lives were fundamentally headed in the same direction. They were both led by the same faith in Israel's God. God had brought them together, and their faith in him would sustain them all the days of their life.'* (Iain Duguid, *The Gospel According to Abraham*, 166)

How might this passage provide wise counsel for those considering marriage or supporting others who are?

TAKEAWAY

10. Are you facing a big decision in your life at the moment? Share it with the group and pray for each other that God might grant wisdom, guidance and an obedient heart.
11. God governs not only the miracles of life, but the each and everyday circumstances for our ultimate good. Spend time in prayer praising God for his goodness and his power.