

Genesis Chapter 24 Summary - John Karmelich

I'm only going to cover one chapter this week, but it has 66 verses, so that's plenty! In my last lesson, I said that the Bible likes to repeat patterns. Our lives can be the same way as God often tried to teach us things and will repeat it until we get His point. Here in Chapter 24, we get examples showing us we are chosen by God and then that we're to commit our lives to serving Him. I realize that's New Testament, as I also realize the Christian church was a mystery in the Old Testament (Ephesians 3:1-12). Still, the clues exist of what God desires of us via bible patterns about eternal destiny as well as what He desires of us. That leads me to my favorite question, so what? Bible clues teach how He chose us and how He desires we respond to that calling. Again, it's a reminder that He wants us to live as a witness for Him! Let me explain that a little better:

The focus of this chapter is on arranging a bride for Abraham's son Isaac. Abraham's at least 137 if my memory is correct and Isaac was 40! Don't know why Abraham waited so long but he figured out that it's time to arrange a marriage as "I'm old and want grandkids!" The chapter mentions near the end, that Isaac getting a bride helped with the pain of losing his mom. That's why I suspect this event took place soon after that. The chapter's mostly about Abraham sending his top servant a very long distance to the place he came from (think Iraq/Iran area) to get a bride for his son, because he doesn't want the bride to be from the land of Israel. If I was Isaac, I'd wonder, "Hey dad, I need to go on this trip if I'm to marry this girl", but Abraham insists he stays behind!" To me I see the pattern about the fact a Gentile bride is arranged to be the bride of the chosen son by God! The fact that she traveled to Israel immediately just to meet her future husband "sight unseen" reminds me of the fact that we're willing to commit our lives to Jesus in effect, "sight unseen"! I realize she's not perfect, and we'll read later of sins she commits. It shows how God chooses who He chooses. With all that said, in effect like this bride (Rebecca), we are willing to accept our roles to become to become the "bride of Christ" (nothing sexual, it's just an image we can relate to) and see what we can learn from the Rebecca's story. Ok then, it's time for the details:

I always like to start with where we left off. In the previous chapter we had a long, "haggling session" as Abraham's long-time wife died and he made his only purchase of land in the land of Israel that stood the test of time till the Israelites came there over 400 years later! I suspect this chapter is soon after the last one because near the end of this chapter, it says that Isaac marrying his wife helped to ease the loss of his mom! It's a clue, not a fact! (As I said last lesson, that grave site can be visited today in Israel!)

The key point of this chapter is Abraham tells his top servant (the name of which is never given), who's to go to where Abraham came from to find a bride for his son who is 40 years old at this point. What is fascinating to me is we get incredible details about the trip, the fact that 10 camels were loaded up with lots of valuable things, the "how this servant is to spot the right girl" is told twice in these 66 verses! It is told once as Abraham is explaining to this unnamed servant, "Here's the deal: My son Isaac is not to marry anyone here in the land of Israel (called Canaan back then). He's to marry one of my relatives in the land I came from! You (that unnamed servant top servant of Abraham) are to travel a great distance (think of going from Israel to the middle of Iraq). You are to bring lots of gifts and if it happens exactly as I say it means you've done your job! If it doesn't work out that way, consider the job done and that's that!" The amazing thing about this story is we get incredible details. For example, the exact number of camels is mentioned for this journey! Maybe it's just to paint a detailed picture, but I don't think details are given for the sake of details. I'll get into all of that in a bit!

Before I get "bogged down in details" let's consider the big picture for a second. Like I said the bible's famous for working in patterns. Here's dad deciding how to get a wife for his 40-year-old son Isaac! It involves having his top servant travel hundreds of miles to where Abraham was from! Remember God is going to wipe out the Cannanites in about 400 years (Genesis 15:13-16). Abraham realized if he will have multitudes of descendants through history, a local girl wasn't an option! Either way God told him to do it this way or Abraham figured his relatives would know about his "God obsession"! The picture of the "promised son" staying in (associated with) the land of Israel is a picture of Jesus. The church is called "the bride of Christ" in the New Testament (See Ephesians 5:22-23). It doesn't mean we'll all be female for eternity. It is a word picture of how the church will be intimately close to Jesus. With all of that out of system, here is Abraham sending his unnamed servant (a picture of the Holy Spirit) who will work on his own to arrange a bride for the "miracle promised son" Isaac. I find it fascinating that we'll see this future bride sin badly in a matter of chapters (Chapter 27)! Still, she's still the "perfect bride for the one who God promised a miracle birth for". Just saying the Biblical pattern is there and we can see how the church in all its imperfections is modeled in this story!

Meanwhile back to the details: The servant traveled to Mesopotamia (think Iraq) with servants and lots of valuable gifts. The servant devises a test saying, "If the right girl offers me water and agrees to give water to all my camels, then I know she's the one! Rebecca is the granddaughter of Abraham's brother (this was before the gene pool was corrupted)! She is described as beautiful (just as God sees us as His beautiful bride to be). Rebecca passes the test by giving the man and his camels water. In turn we then see this servant give Rebecca valuable gifts. Obviously, then she runs home to tell her family!

We also get introduced to her brother Laban, who will be significant when we get the story of Jacob in a matter of chapters. Laban "isn't stupid", in that he sees the valuable gifts this man brought to her and the rest of the family. He is probably thinking this guy is rich so if my sister wants to go, why should I say no? They ask her if she wants to go and she's willing to marry Isaac and take off immediately. It's a lot like our relationship with Jesus. Once we figure out He's God, we usually commit pretty fast with that knowledge in hand! Laban asks her to wait 10 days to say goodbye, she says no as they take off in that same day taking along a servant girl of hers.

I can't move on without discussing the fact the bible mentions there were 10 camels for the trip, and we read of her brother trying to delay things 10 days. Some commentators think the "10" represents the 10 Commandments or the law in general. Interesting if true. I suspect both tie to the fact the Law leads us to God. To share one of my favorite quotes, "If they won't listen to Jesus, give them Moses". All that I am saying is the reality of sin and the consequences thereof leads us to Jesus. We get a 10-camel group that leads the "bride" to her husband an attempt at a 10-day delay of people preferring to live under His law than a life of trusting God to guide us! I could be way off on this but it's an interesting theory!

Bottom line is Rebecca's family says nice goodbye blessing and off she goes. When Rebecca and all of the rest get back to Isaac, in effect she agrees to marry him and covers her face (which is a Middle East way of saying in effect I'm taken). It was a way of us saying not to our spouses but to sin, that I'm now taken as I belong to Christ! It's a 66-verse story. The details are fascinating as they point us to Jesus as a model for our eternal relationship!

The final part of the chapter is about the consummation of the marriage itself (first night of sex) and it's occurring in his mother's old tent and the fact it comforted Isaac over losing his mother! So, why's that mentioned in the bible? I suspect it's because almost all of us grieve family losses of life, and maybe it is to just show we can move on! Since Isaac wasn't married at 40 also tells me he was close to his mom and accepting a wife gave him a new woman to focus on after her loss.

In short this long story is a word picture of us being arranged to spend eternity with God. We're chosen by God and must accept it. It's a great picture (pattern) how God works out history to arrange in effect for a non-Jewish bride to be the wife of the "Chosen One".

On the same page as this study is a more detailed study I wrote many years back. You are welcome to email me if you want or join my list to the get the latest lesson. Thanks for reading. John