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Genesis 24 3



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Genesis 24

Read the passage aloud together, have your open Bibles open to compare but I suggest you use this version mostly:

"The Message" version

2-4 Abraham spoke to the senior servant in his household, the one in charge of everything he had, "Put your hand under my thigh and swear by God¹—God of Heaven, God of Earth—that you will not get a wife for my son from among the young women of the Canaanites here, but will go to the land of my birth and get a wife for my son Isaac." 5 The servant answered, "But what if the woman refuses to leave home and come with me? Do I then take your son back to your home country?" 6-8 Abraham said, "Oh no. Never. By no means are you to take my son back there. God, the God of Heaven, took me from the home of my father and from the country of my birth and spoke to me in solemn promise, 'I'm giving this land to your descendants.' This God will send his angel ahead of you to get a wife for my son. And if the woman won't come, you are free from this oath you've sworn to me. But under no circumstances are you to take my son back there." 9 So the servant put his hand under the thigh of his master Abraham and gave his solemn oath.

10-14 The servant took ten of his master's camels and, loaded with gifts from his master, travelled to Aram Naharaim and the city of Nahor. Outside the city, he made the camels kneel at a well. It was evening, the time when the women came to draw water. He prayed, "O God, God of my master Abraham, make things go smoothly this day; treat my master Abraham well! As I stand here by the spring while the young women of the town come out to get water, let

the girl to whom I say, 'Lower your jug and give me a drink,' and who answers, 'Drink, and let me also water your camels'—let her be the woman you have picked out for your servant Isaac. Then I'll know that you're working graciously behind the scenes for my master."

15-17 It so happened that the words were barely out of his mouth when Rebekah, the daughter of Bethuel whose mother was Milcah the wife of Nahor, Abraham's brother, came out with a water jug on her shoulder. The girl was stunningly beautiful, a pure virgin. She went down to the spring, filled her jug, and came back up. The servant ran to meet her and said, "Please, can I have a sip of water from your jug?" 18-21 She said, "Certainly, drink!" And she held the jug so that he could drink. When he had satisfied his thirst she said, "I'll get water for your camels, too, until they've drunk their fill." She promptly emptied her jug into the trough and ran back to the well to fill it, and she kept at it until she had watered all the camels. The man watched, silent. Was this God's answer? Had God made his trip a success or not?

22-23 When the camels had finished drinking, the man brought out gifts, a gold nose ring weighing a little over a quarter of an ounce and two arm bracelets weighing about four ounces, and gave them to her. He asked her, "Tell me about your family? Whose daughter are you? Is there room in your father's house for us to stay the night?" 24-25 She said, "I'm the daughter of Bethuel the son of Milcah and Nahor. And there's plenty of room in our house for you to stay—and lots of straw and feed besides."

26-27 At this the man bowed in worship before God and prayed, "Blessed be God, God of my master Abraham: How generous and true you've been to my master; you've held nothing back. You led

¹ The customary way of taking an oath in those days.



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me right to the door of my master's brother!" 28 And the girl was off and running, telling everyone in her mother's house what had happened.

29-31 Rebekah had a brother named Laban. Laban ran outside to the man at the spring. He had seen the nose ring and the bracelets on his sister and had heard her say, "The man said this and this and this to me." So he went to the man and there he was, still standing with his camels at the spring. Laban welcomed him: "Come on in, blessed of God! Why are you standing out here? I've got the house ready for you; and there's also a place for your camels."...

the story continues later, with the servant asking Laban and his father Bethuel:

49 "Now, tell me what you are going to do. If you plan to respond with a generous yes, tell me. But if not, tell me plainly so I can figure out what to do next."

50-51 Laban and Bethuel answered, "This is totally from God. We have no say in the matter, either yes or no. Rebekah is yours: Take her and go; let her be the wife of your master's son, as God has made plain."

52-54 When Abraham's servant heard their decision, he bowed in worship before God. Then he brought out gifts of silver and gold and clothing and gave them to Rebekah. He also gave expensive gifts to her brother and mother. He and his men had supper and spent the night. But first thing in the morning they were up. He said, "Send me back to my master." 55 Her brother and mother said, "Let the girl stay a while, say another ten days, and then go." 56 He said, "Oh, don't make me wait! God has worked everything out so well—send me off to my master." 57 They said, "We'll call the girl; we'll ask her."

They called Rebekah and asked her, "Do you want to go with this man?" 58 She said, "I'm ready to go." 59-60 So they sent them off, their sister Rebekah with her

nurse, and Abraham's servant with his men. ...

61 Rebekah and her young maids mounted the camels and followed the man. The servant took Rebekah and set off for home.

62-65 Isaac was living in the Negev. He had just come back from a visit to Beer Lahai Roi. In the evening he went out into the field; while meditating he looked up and saw camels coming. When Rebekah looked up and saw Isaac, she got down from her camel and asked the servant, "Who is that man out in the field coming toward us?" "That is my master." She took her veil and covered herself.

66-67 After the servant told Isaac the whole story of the trip, Isaac took Rebekah into the tent of his mother Sarah. He married Rebekah and she became his wife and he loved her. So Isaac found comfort after his mother's death.

Now:

This story is sometimes suggested to be telling us something about the relationship between Jesus (represented by Isaac) and the Church (represented by Rebekah). God the Father "is played by" Abraham.

1 Spend 5 mins quietly re-reading it, and this time mark the text in the following ways:

UNDERLINE the bits you think suggest something about what our attitude to God should be (look at the bits about Rebekah)

2 When you have all had time to do that, discuss the bits you have underlined.

a/ What do they tell us about our attitude to God/Jesus?

b/ How much do you live up to what you have just said together?

3 Rebekah had never seen Isaac, she only knew what the servant said about him, yet



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she made an immediate decision to leave her family (and never see them again). We have never seen Jesus. How do we know what He is like? On flipchart, together make a list of words that describe what you know about Jesus.

Each person talk about which *one* of all those words most attracts you to Jesus.

4 What do you think is represented in our lives by Rebekah choosing to leave her family and head off towards Isaac? On second flipchart, together make a list of words of things which you feel you have given up (or would need to give up) to follow Jesus.

Each person talk about which *one* of all those words has been/would be most difficult to give up.

The next few questions relate directly to the passage:

5 in verses 6-8 Abraham is adamant that Isaac should not go back to the old land. Why do you think this is?

Can you suggest any parallels for us as Christians?

6 The servant prayed and relied completely on God, and was led straight to the right person! Yet when Rebekah does exactly as he prayed, he still doubted. One person in the group share a time when God has answered a prayer for them.

7 The story is of a couple who were chosen for each other, and fell in love after they were married. Can anyone tell of how their love for Jesus has grown since they met Him?

8 Finally, in the last column we are going to consider Rebekah's position at various stages of the story. Remember, this is *symbolic* of where you are with Jesus.

Put a circle round the one that most closely describes what your relationship with Jesus is today, and then tell each other about it.



Hearing about Isaac/ Jesus for first time



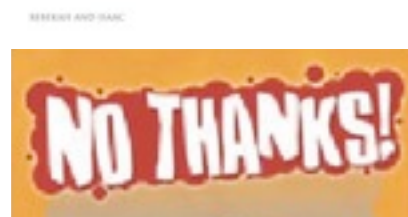
Accepting offer and receiving gifts



Left old life, heading for first meeting with Isaac



In intimate relationship



or, unlike Rebekah, not interested