

Genesis 23-24 Chapter Study

INTRODUCTION

From now on as we begin our Wednesday night study, I'll be giving an overview and outline of the material we'll be covering.

One of the basic principles of interpreting scripture is the importance of context.

So as we work our way verse by verse through a chapter or more on Wednesdays, I want to lay out the context, the larger story what we're looking at fits in to.

If we were to outline the entire Book of Genesis we could do it like this –

- I. Introduction • Chs. 1-11
 - A. Creation – Chs. 1-2
 - B. Fall, Fallout, & Flood – Chs. 3-9
 - C. Rebirth of Civilization – Chs. 10-11
- II. Abraham & His Descendants • Chs. 12-50
 - A. Abraham's Story – Chs. 12-25
 - B. Isaac's Story – Chs. 26-28
 - C. Jacob's Story – Chs. 28-36
 - D. Joseph's Story – Chs. 37-50

If we focused just on Abraham's Story, we could break it down this way –

- I. His Call & Halting First Steps • Chs. 12-13
- II. His Courage & Faith Affirmed • Chs. 14-15
- III. A Serious Stumble With Hagar • Ch. 16
- IV. The Covenant Renewed • Chs. 17-18
- V. Sodom & Gomorrah • Ch. 19
- VI. Another Stumble With Abimelech • Ch. 20
- VII. Isaac Is Born • Chs. 21-22
- VIII. His Later Years • Chs. 23-25

Tonight, we'll be looking at this last section – Abraham's last years.

- I. Ch. 23 – Sarah's Death & Burial
- II. Ch. 24 – A Bride for Isaac
- III. Ch. 25 – Transition From Abraham to Isaac

I. CHAPTER 23 • SARAH'S DEATH & BURIAL

A. Vs. 1-2 / Sarah Dies, Abraham Mourns

1Sarah lived one hundred and twenty-seven years; these were the years of the life of Sarah.

The story jumps several years into the future between chs. 22 & 23.

Since Sarah was 90 when Isaac was born, that means he is about 37 now.

Sarah is the only woman in the Bible who has her age recorded at death.

2So Sarah died in Kirjath Arba (that is, Hebron) in the land of Canaan, and Abraham came to mourn for Sarah and to weep for her.

The last place we read of Abraham locating his clan was Beersheba to the South. Kirjath Arba or Hebron was located to the north and was another one of Abraham's favorite locations.

It appears he'd located his main camp there but had taken the flock far a-field in search of pasture.

When word reached him that Sarah had died, he returned to the base at Hebron to mourn her. [Show map]

The author is careful to note that Abraham didn't just mourn his wife's death as some kind of a formal ritual – he wept for her!

They had been married for many years and had shared a wonderful life & love. Abe's grief was genuine and keen – it's to be expected that he would shed crocodile tears over Sarah's passing.

The death of a loved one is cause for grief and we do no one a service by telling them to "cheer up" when they're in such sorrow.

I've been appalled over the years to hear the attempts at comfort some people try to bring someone who's lost a loved husband or wife, a mother or father or even a child.

All too often there's an appeal to faith – the comforter will say something like – "Now come on, dry your tears! Mary is in heaven! Where's your faith?"

This may be well-intentioned but it's rather cruel!

The grief of a husband or wife at the death of a spouse isn't a lack of faith.

It's a sign of genuine love. There's sorrow because of the separation that will now ensue.

Tears are a normal part of the process of grieving, and we would do well to simply embrace them as a gift God has given us to express sorrow and loss.

Abraham is the Father of Faith – and he wept.

Jesus Himself wept in the face of death when He stood at the grave of His friend Lazarus!

In that moment, He could look down the entire span of history and see the collective grief of all the gravesides men, women, and children have stood at.

All those deaths are the result of sin – sin for which He'd come to make an atonement and overcome.

Even death itself would be defeated by His work – yet He grieved and wept!

B. Vs. 3-20 / Sarah's Burial

1. Vs. 3-18 / Abraham Negotiates For A Tomb

3Then Abraham stood up from before his dead, and spoke to the sons of Heth, saying, 4"I am a foreigner and a visitor among you. Give me property for a burial place among you, that I may bury my dead out of my sight."

After his grief had abated enough to allow him to concern himself with business, Abraham began to take practical steps for burying his wife.

This would mean securing land by purchasing it from its inhabitants.

In his travels, Abraham found a cave in a particular field he knew would make a great tomb.

It was located not far from his base at Hebron.

So he went to the current owners and inhabitants of the land and asked them if he could buy it.

5And the sons of Heth answered Abraham, saying to him, 6“Hear us, my lord: You are a mighty prince among us; bury your dead in the choicest of our burial places. None of us will withhold from you his burial place, that you may bury your dead.”

The people respond that Abraham is like one of their own nobles.

He's free to bury his wife along with their dead in one of their burial places.

7Then Abraham stood up and bowed himself to the people of the land, the sons of Heth. 8And he spoke with them, saying, “If it is your wish that I bury my dead out of my sight, hear me, and meet with Ephron the son of Zohar for me, 9that he may give me the cave of Machpelah which he has, which is at the end of his field. Let him give it to me at the full price, as property for a burial place among you.”

Abraham shows the deepest appreciation for their offer but says he would rather start a new tomb than locate his dead with theirs.

He has a certain cave in a little region called “Machpelah” in mind.

It's located at one end of a field owned by one of them – a guy named Ephron.

Whereas they'd made the offer to Abraham that he bury Sarah among their graves for free, Abraham says he will pay full price for this new burial site.

Word was sent to Ephron of Abraham's desire to purchase the field and he came to the gate of the city where the transaction would be conducted.

10Now Ephron dwelt among the sons of Heth; and Ephron the Hittite answered Abraham in the presence of the sons of Heth, all who entered at the gate of his city, saying, 11“No, my lord, hear me: I give you the field and the cave that is in it; I give it to you in the presence of the sons of my people. I give it to you. Bury your dead!”

A couple things to note here.

1) Ephron is called a Hittite and one of the sons of Heth, from which the word Hittite comes.

For years, critics of the Bible mocked scripture because of it's reference to the Hittites, who the Bible says later dominated the entire Fertile Crescent.

Since there as no archaeological evidence for the Hittites, the Bible was scorned by skeptics!

Then, the Hittites civilization was discovered in Turkey, and indeed, it was found that they had conquered the entire Fertile Crescent and had even menaced the mighty Egyptian Empire.

But even after the discovery of the Hittites, skeptics mocked because of their reference here in Genesis 23. You see, this is too early for their appearance, it was said by the critics.

Again, archaeology has confirmed that the Hittites had indeed pressed into many areas of the ancient Middle East and there is now abundant evidence that there were small colonies and enclaves of Hittite occupation during the time of the Jewish Patriarchs!

2) Ancient forms of bargaining have been revealed by discovery of documents that record negotiations – and what we read here is a classic form used in the purchase of land.

A buyer would indicate his desire for land and the owner would indicate their interest in selling by saying something polite like, “Look, we’re such good friends, just take it.”

Now of course, that wasn’t a sincere offer, it was merely a way of saying, “Okay, I’ll sell it to you.”

But often times, the buyer was simply just trying to see what a plot of land might cost, with no real sincerity or aim of buying it – he might just be looking for a bargain.

Abraham came to the leaders of Hebron and told them that he wanted land for a tomb.

They replied – “Sure!”

He indicated he was sincere and not just rooting for a bargain by saying he’d pay the full price of whatever they asked; this was his way of letting them know he was earnest.

When he told them of the particular site he had in mind, they sent for the owner, Ephron, who came and repeated the opening line of negotiations; “Look, we’re pals – go ahead and take whatever you want.”

Now the ball is in Abe’s court – he needs to return the serve.

12Then Abraham bowed himself down before the people of the land; 13and he spoke to Ephron in the hearing of the people of the land, saying, “If you will give it, please hear me. I will give you money for the field; take it from me and I will bury my dead there.”

14And Ephron answered Abraham, saying to him, 15“My lord, listen to me; the land is worth four hundred shekels of silver. What is that between you and me? So bury your dead.”

Ephron politely tells Abraham the full-price for the field containing the cave of Machpelah.

This is the first bid and would be a sum well higher than the actual value of the Land.

When bargaining, the seller always tarts high because he knows he needs room for negotiating.

The buyer comes back with a ridiculously low figure and as time and negotiation goes on they eventually arrive at some middle point of compromise in which both are satisfied and feel they’ve gained an advantage.

But Abraham is in no mood for bargaining! Though 400 shekels of silver is a vastly inflated price, he agrees to it.

16And Abraham listened to Ephron; and Abraham weighed out the silver for Ephron which he had named in the hearing of the sons of Heth, four hundred shekels of silver, currency of the merchants.

17So the field of Ephron which was in Machpelah, which was before Mamre, the field and the cave which was in it, and all the trees that were in the field, which were within all the surrounding borders, were deeded 18to Abraham as a possession in the presence of the sons of Heth, before all who went in at the gate of his city.

You can be sure that Ephron’s and all the leaders of Hebron jaws dropped when Abraham simply counted out the cost of the field.

They were getting ready for a real show in the negotiations between Ephron and Abraham.

But they were disappointed when Abraham capitulated right off the bat.

There's something of importance for us to glean from the example of Abraham in his purchase of Machpelah.

Note how Abraham, though a rich and powerful man, and one who was both a prophet and the friend of God, treated these unbelievers in business with humility, courtesy & respect!

In both v. 7 & 12 it says that he stood and bowed to them.

As a rich man, when he arrived at the gate to conduct business, a seat would have been prepared for him.

By standing so that he might bow, he was acting in genuine humility.

His manner and words throughout this whole affair were filled with respect and tremendous courtesy.

I'm shocked and appalled by the rude manner some Christians take with unbelievers!

There's a discourtesy and smug attitude of superiority that is sometimes portrayed by those who profess to be Christians that leaves a sour taste and bad odor.

The rudeness with which they treat service people or counter workers is inexcusable.

What's a really bad witness is how they will bow in prayer over a meal at a restaurant, and leave a tract on the table but no tip!

I know a brother who seeks to implement his faith in excellence in his business.

He strives to do all things with integrity, courtesy and respect.

He did work some time back for another business that is supposed to be a Christian ministry and they are now trying to finagle paying their bill.

It's bad enough when a supposed Christian ministry reneges on its financial obligation to another brother; how much more damaging is it when they owe the debt to unbelievers?!? What kind of a witness is that?

If you're a Christian, follow Abraham's example of doing business with the world and show humility, courtesy and respect.

If you advertise in the paper or yellow pages or anywhere else and use a cross or the fish symbol, you'd better make sure all your dealings are reflective of the excellence and integrity of Christ.

If you advertise on KDAR or KKLA, you'd better make good on your promise and integrate the principles of honesty and the highest business and personal ethics.

2. Vs. 19-20 / Sarah's Burial

19And after this, Abraham buried Sarah his wife in the cave of the field of Machpelah, before Mamre (that is, Hebron) in the land of Canaan. **20**So the field and the cave that is in it were deeded to Abraham by the sons of Heth as property for a burial place.

God gave the entire land of Israel to Abraham.

He could have, by rights, simply taken the initial offer of the sons of Heth and said, “Thanks – it’s all really mine anyway because God gave it to me.” But he didn’t do that. He observed the forms of the culture of that day and measured out the 400 shekels and then took the deed.

Abraham is giving us a wonderful example of what it means to live by faith in the midst of the everyday world.

He wanted his witness for the excellence of God to be seen and valued by those who didn’t know God.

His spirituality found expression in the care with which he lived IN THIS WORLD and the respect he paid to others!

He wasn’t so heavenly minded that he was of no earthly good.

As we saw in the message this last Sunday in his planting of the tamarisk grove at Beersheba, Abraham’s faith in God resulted in tangible fruit in this world.

His faith produced shade and protection from the burning sun.

His faith in the sure promise of God built an oasis in the desert.

And so it has been throughout history.

It is people of faith, people who looked to and believed in God who have been the origin of most of the good our world has known.

Hospitals, orphanages, social reforms movements, are the fruit of people who simply applied their faith in God to the affairs of earth.

D. James Kennedy wrote a wonderful book which chronicles the positive impact genuine faith in Jesus Christ has had on history in – *What If Jesus Had Never Been Born?*

Once secured, Abraham buried Sarah in the cave of Machpelah.

Abraham would later be interred there as well, then Isaac & his wife Rebekah, then Jacob & Leah, and finally, Joseph.

Standing on the site of their tomb today is a massive stone structure which finds its origin in the time of David & Solomon and rebuilt by Herod the Great.

There’s evidence that it was at one time a church but is today a Moslem mosque.

II. CHAPTER 24 • A BRIDE FOR ISAAC

A. Vs. 1-9 / Abraham Charges His Servant

1Now Abraham was old, well advanced in age; and the Lord had blessed Abraham in all things.

What an awesome testimony!

Abraham was not a perfect man – he stumbled at points on the path of faith, but they were never fatal; he always got back up again and kept on truckin’. He stumbled in Egypt. He stumbled with Abimelech. He stumbled with Hagar. But at each point, he humbly acknowledged his error, repented, received the Lord’s ready forgiveness and then picked up where he’d left off and renewed his pilgrimage.

Abraham was a man who knew and understood that the blessing he enjoyed was not the result of his own efforts but the result of God’s grace & favor.

For Abraham, faith was simply a response to the revelation of God, not to some self-inspired dream or spiritualized desire.

As an old man, he now looks at his son Isaac, who is at least 40, and realizes he needs a wife!

While God's promises are sure, as Abraham had come to see for himself, they require our faithful participation.

God had given Canaan to him, but he had to leave Ur and travel there in order to take possession.

God had promised a son through Sarah, but that meant they needed to be faithful to each other in the means of procreation.

If there are to be descendants in the fulfillment of the promise God had given, then Isaac needed a wife and Abraham knew none of the local girls were suitable.

2So Abraham said to the oldest servant of his house, who ruled over all that he had, "Please, put your hand under my thigh, 3and I will make you swear by the Lord, the God of heaven and the God of the earth, that you will not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell; 4but you shall go to my country and to my family, and take a wife for my son Isaac."

This servant was Abraham's chief steward, the man who had the oversight of the day to day affairs of the community.

In 15:2, he's named as Eliezer – but that was some 60 years before and there's a good chance it was a new guy.

This guy had been with Abraham through thick and thin and Abe knew he could be trusted with this most important charge.

Even then, Abraham bound him to a solemn oath by this practice of putting his hand under his thigh.

The thigh and the loin refer to the same part of the body; it's a place of vulnerability.

When they wanted to make the most solemn and binding of personal oaths, one would put his hand under the other's thigh and make the promise.

The idea is, "I've got you by the _____ and just as you are now totally in my power and I won't take advantage of you, so I will do my utmost best to keep the promise I make to you now."

To this promise not to arrange a bride from the Canaanites but to go to Abraham's relatives in Mesopotamia, Abraham adds an oath taken before the eyes and ears of God.

5And the servant said to him, "Perhaps the woman will not be willing to follow me to this land. Must I take your son back to the land from which you came?"

The servant wanted to be clear on the stipulations of what Abraham was looking for in his making this promise.

What if none of the women back in Mesopotamia are willing to come to Canaan to marry Isaac, should he then come get Isaac and take him back there?

It's easy to understand why the steward would ask this.

Mesopotamia was the Brentwood or Pacific Palisades of the day and Canaan was like Blythe.

6But Abraham said to him, “Beware that you do not take my son back there. 7The Lord God of heaven, who took me from my father’s house and from the land of my family, and who spoke to me and swore to me, saying, ‘To your descendants I give this land,’ He will send His angel before you, and you shall take a wife for my son from there. 8And if the woman is not willing to follow you, then you will be released from this oath; only do not take my son back there.” 9So the servant put his hand under the thigh of Abraham his master, and swore to him concerning this matter.

Abraham was certain God would precede the servant and be at work making the arrangements so that a woman would return with him as a bride for Isaac.

He was so certain of this that he said if no one was willing to return, then the servant would be released from the oath altogether and the matter of a bride would be a moot point.

In any case, Isaac is NOT to go to Mesopotamia.

Canaan was the place of promise and as the Son of Promise, he was to stay there!

B. Vs. 10-14 / The Trip to Nahor

10Then the servant took ten of his master’s camels and departed, for all his master’s goods were in his hand. And he arose and went to Mesopotamia, to the city of Nahor.

[Map]

This is a trip of over 450 miles and would take many days.

That’s why he took so many camels – this was a small caravan.

As we see in v. 32, he wasn’t alone either, there were other servants with him as would be necessary for such a caravan.

It was a part of the arrangements for securing a bride that one tried to impress her father with what a good deal it would be for him to consent to her marriage to the suitor.

The main factor that would sway him was the wealth and power of the suitor.

So when the steward left for Nahor, he knew he needed to give the prospective bride and her family something to entice them to let her go – thus the caravan with all its wealth in camels, goods, and servants.

11And he made his camels kneel down outside the city by a well of water at evening time, the time when women go out to draw water. 12Then he said, “O Lord God of my master Abraham, please give me success this day, and show kindness to my master Abraham. 13Behold, here I stand by the well of water, and the daughters of the men of the city are coming out to draw water. 14Now let it be that the young woman to whom I say, ‘Please let down your pitcher that I may drink,’ and she says, ‘Drink, and I will also give your camels a drink’—let her be the one You have appointed for Your servant Isaac. And by this I will know that You have shown kindness to my master.”

Once they arrive at Nahor, the steward turned to the Lord in prayer and asked for guidance. How was he to go about selecting a mate for his master’s son?

He strikes on the plan of waiting and asking the women who come out if they will give him an drink.

Now, this is clever on his part; he knows what a good looking woman is, so he decides to apply one filter by only asking those gals who are

attractive!

But he leaves the rest totally in the Lord's hands.

Common hospitality would demand that whoever he asked a drink of water from would give him one.

But uncommon charity would move a woman to not only provide him a drink but to go through the very arduous task of watering his camels!

Any woman who would do that was virtuous beyond the norm.

A camel will drink between 10 to 20 gallons!

So watering 10 camels meant a lot of hard work and a serious time commitment.

C. Vs. 15-21 / Rebekah Passes the Test

15And it happened, before he had finished speaking, that behold, Rebekah, who was born to Bethuel, son of Milcah, the wife of Nahor, Abraham's brother, [this would make her Abraham's great-niece] came out with her pitcher on her shoulder. **16**Now the young woman was very beautiful to behold, [alright] a virgin; no man had known her. [better yet] And she went down to the well, filled her pitcher, and came up. **17**And the servant ran to meet her and said, "Please let me drink a little water from your pitcher." **18**So she said, "Drink, my lord." Then she quickly let her pitcher down to her hand, and gave him a drink. **19**And when she had finished giving him a drink, she said, "I will draw water for your camels also, until they have finished drinking." **20**Then she quickly emptied her pitcher into the trough, ran back to the well to draw water, and drew for all his camels. **21**And the man, wondering at her, remained silent so as to know whether the Lord had made his journey prosperous or not.

This woman, the first he approached, was the living embodiment of what he'd just proposed to the Lord and he's simply blown away by the good fortune.

The favor of God he's witnessed for years in the camp of Abraham on Abraham he is now experiencing first-hand for and to himself, and he's stoked!

Rebekah first gave the steward a drink, then she proceeded to water his camels, all 10 of them!

Note that the steward never intervened, assisted or stopped her; he waited to see if she was merely a talker or a sincere doer.

Being the chief steward of Abraham's large community and running all the other household servants, he knew that for some, it is much easier to talk like a servant than to actually serve.

He wanted to see if Rebekah had not only a servant's talk but a servant's heart.

Being a servant is a prominent NT theme and was oft on the lips and seen in the example of Jesus.

Today, there are lots of Bible teachers who can wax eloquent on servanthood – but don't watch their lifestyle too closely.

They may have a good servant talk, but they don't have a servant's walk.

If I may say so – this is why I so respect and admire Pastor Chuck Smith.

He's a man who consistently serves in any way necessary and sees now task as beneath his station or dignity.

We have some wonderful servants here at Calvary Chapel of Oxnard, too!

Rebekah was a true servant – and so demonstrates a humility and centeredness that

commends her as a wonderful life-companion!

The only thing left for the steward to discover is if she is indeed a relative of Abraham's and if she'll consent to return with him to become the bride of Isaac.

By the way – the Bible is given to understatement, so when it says that Rebekah was very beautiful – we can take it that she was drop-dead gorgeous!

D. Vs. 22-49 / Meeting Rebekah's Family

22So it was, when the camels had finished drinking, that the man took a golden nose ring weighing half a shekel, and two bracelets for her wrists weighing ten shekels of gold, **23**and said, "Whose daughter are you? Tell me, please, is there room in your father's house for us to lodge?"

24So she said to him, "I am the daughter of Bethuel, Milcah's son, whom she bore to Nahor." **25**Moreover she said to him, "We have both straw and feed enough, and room to lodge."

This gave the steward two important pieces of information –

- 1) She was a relative of Abraham's and so a perfect candidate as a bride.
- 2) She came from a fairly wealthy family herself if there was enough space and resource to lodge and feed them.

26Then the man bowed down his head and worshiped the Lord. **27**And he said, "Blessed be the Lord God of my master Abraham, who has not forsaken His mercy and His truth toward my master. As for me, being on the way, the Lord led me to the house of my master's brethren." **28**So the young woman ran and told her mother's household these things.

Rebekah had heard stories of her great-uncle Abraham and how he'd left so many years ago for the frontier.

This may very well be the first news her family had had of them and she knows it's going to create quite a stir to see that her great-uncle has become a rich man – so rich he could send this caravan all the way from Canaan!

The steward makes a comment here that I find enlightening – "As for me, being on the way, the Lord led me . . ."

He began to move in the direction of obvious faithfulness to the Lord of his master.

Once those first few steps of obedience were taken, then he prayed for the Lord's continued direction.

It's an old adage of mine when counseling people seeking guidance from the Lord, "You can't steer a parked car." The car has to be moving for the wheel to turn and the direction to be followed.

Even so, we need to be compliant to the light and direction the Lord has already given.

As we're faithful with today, then the Lord will reveal the path for tomorrow.

Far too many people want God to lay out His whole plan for their lives before they will take the first step. But this is not the way the Lord works.

[Explain]

29Now Rebekah had a brother whose name was Laban, and Laban ran out to the man

by the well. 30So it came to pass, when he saw the nose ring, and the bracelets on his sister's wrists, and when he heard the words of his sister Rebekah, saying, "Thus the man spoke to me," that he went to the man. And there he stood by the camels at the well. 31And he said, "Come in, O blessed of the Lord! Why do you stand outside? For I have prepared the house, and a place for the camels."

Had he really? It's not likely he had, he's just trying to ingratiate himself with the steward. He likes what he sees and knows the guys must have come all this way for a great purpose!

Laban wanted to be on the inside track with this rich dude guy from Canaan. As we read on more in the story of Genesis we'll see that Laban was a conniving, greedy sneak!

32Then the man came to the house. And he unloaded the camels, and provided straw and feed for the camels, and water to wash his feet and the feet of the men who were with him. 33Food was set before him to eat, but he said, "I will not eat until I have told about my errand." And he [Laban] said, "Speak on."

34So he said, "I am Abraham's servant. 35The Lord has blessed my master greatly, and he has become great; and He has given him flocks and herds, silver and gold, male and female servants, and camels and donkeys. 36And Sarah my master's wife bore a son to my master when she was old; and to him he has given all that he has. 37Now my master made me swear, saying, 'You shall not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, in whose land I dwell; 38but you shall go to my father's house and to my family, and take a wife for my son.' 39And I said to my master, 'Perhaps the woman will not follow me.' 40But he said to me, 'The Lord, before whom I walk, will send His angel with you and prosper your way; and you shall take a wife for my son from my family and from my father's house. 41You will be clear from this oath when you arrive among my family; for if they will not give her to you, then you will be released from my oath.' 42" And this day I came to the well and said, 'O Lord God of my master Abraham, if You will now prosper the way in which I go, 43behold, I stand by the well of water; and it shall come to pass that when the virgin comes out to draw water, and I say to her, "Please give me a little water from your pitcher to drink," 44and she says to me, "Drink, and I will draw for your camels also,"—let her be the woman whom the Lord has appointed for my master's son.' 45" But before I had finished speaking in my heart, there was Rebekah, coming out with her pitcher on her shoulder; and she went down to the well and drew water. And I said to her, 'Please let me drink.' 46And she made haste and let her pitcher down from her shoulder, and said, 'Drink, and I will give your camels a drink also.' So I drank, and she gave the camels a drink also. 47Then I asked her, and said, 'Whose daughter are you?' And she said, 'The daughter of Bethuel, Nahor's son, whom Milcah bore to him.' So I put the nose ring on her nose and the bracelets on her wrists. 48And I bowed my head and worshiped the Lord, and blessed the Lord God of my master Abraham, who had led me in the way of truth to take the daughter of my master's brother for his son. 49Now if you will deal kindly and truly with my master, tell me. And if not, tell me, that I may turn to the right hand or to the left."

There's only one thing left to find out – if Rebekah and her family will indeed consent to this marriage.

The servant is careful to relate the whole story from the beginning to show that God has divinely ordered his steps.

E. Vs. 50-67 / The Decision & Return to Canaan

1. Vs. 50-53 / The Family Consents

50Then Laban and Bethuel answered and said, “The thing comes from the Lord; we cannot speak to you either bad or good.

Bethuel was Rebekah’s father. Because he and Laban consulted together about this, it seems that Bethuel was quite old or in ill health and had charged his son Laban with the task of running the family.

But in a matter like this, he had to be consulted by Laban.

Once they’d heard the story they knew they had little choice in the matter – it was obvious the Lord was indicating His will for Rebekah to be Isaac’s wife!

51Here is Rebekah before you; take her and go, and let her be your master’s son’s wife, as the Lord has spoken.” **52**And it came to pass, when Abraham’s servant heard their words, that he worshiped the Lord, bowing himself to the earth. **53**Then the servant brought out jewelry of silver, jewelry of gold, and clothing, and gave them to Rebekah. He also gave precious things to her brother and to her mother.

This was the bridal price or dowry that was the practice of the time.

Rebekah’s family had to be compensated for her departure from the work force of the home.

And it’s pretty clear from her servant’s attitude that she would be dearly missed!

But the treasure Abraham’s steward gave softened the blow and loss of her departure.

Besides the bridal price paid to her brother and mother, he gave fabulous jewelry to her and decked her out in the finest gems and precious metals as well as a whole new wardrobe!

These were all engagement presents!

2. Vs. 54-57 / The Family Is Reluctant

54And he and the men who were with him ate and drank and stayed all night. Then they arose in the morning, and he said, “Send me away to my master.” **55**But her brother and her mother said, “Let the young woman stay with us a few days, at least ten; after that she may go.”

This whole thing had happened suddenly and one day later the steward is ready to make the return trip.

But Rebekah’s family now realizes that when she leaves, there’s little chance they will ever see her again – so they ask for some time with her before she departs.

But the servant senses something less than honorable in Laban’s request for more time.

Indeed, Laban uses a similar ploy with Rebekah’s son Jacob, his own nephew, in just a few years.

So sensing something amiss, the servant begs to leave immediately.

56And he said to them, “Do not hinder me, since the Lord has prospered my way; send me away so that I may go to my master.” **57**So they said, “We will call the young woman and ask her personally.”

No doubt they thought for sure that she'd ask to stay for a while – if so, they were in for a surprise.

3. V. 58 / Rebekah Consents

58Then they called Rebekah and said to her, “Will you go with this man?” And she said, “I will go.”

Don't you find it amazing that in all this talk about marriage, there's been virtually no mention of Isaac?

He's not described, other than the mention he's the sole heir of all his father's fortune and the focus of God's blessing.

In fact, the last time we encountered Isaac was on Mt. Moriah in ch. 22 as he was bound and laid on the wood with Abraham's hand holding the sacrificial knife raised over him.

That whole story is so clearly symbolic of God the Father who offered His Son, Jesus Christ on that very same hill 200 years later.

But that's not the end of the picture.

Even though Abraham had told the two servants who went with he and Isaac to Mt. Moriah that he and Isaac would return to them, when the events on the mount were over, we only read that Abraham returned to them, Isaac isn't mentioned.

It's as if the Holy Spirit intends us to think of Isaac, the Son of Promise as still on Mt. Moriah, offered up to the Lord, but then in a sense brought back to life by God's intervention, staying Abraham's hand and offering a ram in his place.

The next thing we see concerning Isaac is the father telling his servant to go to a distant land and find a bride; a picture of the Holy Spirit who comes to earth to draw out a bride for Christ.

The servant goes, and discovers how God has been at work to prepare his way and to miraculously acquire a bride for the son, just as the Lord draws and convicts us and brings us to faith in Christ.

Like Rebekah never having seen Isaac but won to and for him, we've never seen Jesus, but the Holy Spirit has won us to and for Him.

Then, just as the servant gave Rebekah gifts to adorn her and prepare her for her wedding day, so the Holy Spirit bestows the gifts of grace on us that equip and beautify us and prepare us as it says in Ephesians 4 for the day when we will be united with Christ.

The servant gave Rebekah new clothes, and so we are given the robe of righteousness through faith in Christ.

We are Rebekah!

4. Vs. 49-67 / The Return

59So they sent away Rebekah their sister and her nurse, and Abraham's servant and his men. **60**And they blessed Rebekah and said to her: “Our sister, may you become the mother of thousands of ten thousands; And may your descendants possess the gates of those who hate them.” **61**Then Rebekah and her maids arose, and they rode on the camels and followed the man. So the servant took Rebekah and departed.

As would be fitting for a woman of her stature, when Rebekah left Nahor, the woman who'd been her nurse or nanny, as well as her servant girls went with her.

Once again, the journey from Nahor back to Canaan is quickly passed over though it would have taken many days.

If a caravan made 40 miles a day, which is a pretty good pace – that means it took nearly two weeks!

62Now Isaac came from the way of Beer Lahai Roi, for he dwelt in the South. **63**And Isaac went out to meditate in the field in the evening; and he lifted his eyes and looked, and there, the camels were coming. **64**Then Rebekah lifted her eyes, and when she saw Isaac she dismounted from her camel; **65**for she had said to the servant, "Who is this man walking in the field to meet us?" The servant said, "It is my master." So she took a veil and covered herself. **66**And the servant told Isaac all the things that he had done. **67**Then Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent; and he took Rebekah and she became his wife, and he loved her. So Isaac was comforted after his mother's death.

This completes the picture of Christ and the church, for this is the first time we encounter Isaac since his symbolic "resurrection" on Mt. Moriah.

The next time he is seen is when he is united to his bride, who covers herself with a veil when she's told who it is.

The veil was symbolic of chastity, modesty, and submission, all virtues the spotless Church will exemplify through the Spirit's Work when Christ comes for us.

It's an interesting insight that this wonderful union was made possible not because either Isaac or Rebekah were looking for a mate but both were faithfully serving the Lord with what was before them and God brought them together.

She was busy in her father's home, just doing daily chores when God stepped into her life and made clear to her the path for marriage he had for her.

Isaac was in the field at evening meditating on the Lord.

The best way to seek a mate is not to, but rather to seek and serve the Lord.

A final piece of the picture regarding Isaac being a picture of Christ and Rebekah pre-figuring the Church is that if the steward was the Eliezer mentioned in ch. 15, then he is a type of the Holy Spirit in an even more clear way.

The name Eliezer means "God helps," or "Helper" and what did Jesus call the Holy Spirit in John 14-16? The Helper!