

Sent: Wednesday, February 6, 2019 6:45 PM
Subject: Last Nite's MOB Study on Genesis 23-24

"Charm is deceitful and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears God is to be praised!" (Proverb 31:30)

Last nite's MOB study on Genesis 23-24 gave us some significant glimpses into the lives of five key "people of God"--including a beautiful love story between a man and woman who God brought together! You might say a "marriage made in heaven"! Well, actually two love stories! Make that three! In essence it was one overall love story made in heaven!

Genesis 23 begins on what can only be described as a sad note! Sarah "lived one hundred and twenty-seven years...and died in Hebron, in the land of Canaan; and Abraham went in to mourn for Sarah and to weep for her"! They had lived some truly exciting years together, including being led by God into the "promised land," and witnessing God miraculously giving them a promised "heir" (Isaac) in their golden years!

Sarah's life is a wonderful story! She's the only woman in the Bible who had her name changed by God and whose age is mentioned at death! (She must have been a beautiful woman, even in old age! Just ask the Pharaoh of Egypt and Abimelech, king of Gerar!)

But she must have been a very godly woman too! Hebrews 11:11 says: "By faith even Sarah herself received (from God) the ability to conceive, even beyond the proper time of life, since she considered Him faithful who had promised!" She's also mentioned in 1 Peter 3:5-6--"For in this way, in former times, the holy women also, who hoped in God, used to adorn themselves, being submissive to their own husbands; just as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, and you have become her children if you do what is right without being freighted with any fear."

(Interestingly, "Willmington's Guide to the Bible" says this: "There are those today who would advocate the adoration of Mary, but in the New Testament it is the life of Sarah that is called to our attention"!)

Well, how did Abraham handle things at this point? Genesis 23:4 says he "spoke to the sons of Heth" about securing a burial site for Sarah--and since they viewed him as a "mighty prince," they offered him "the choicest of our graves"! But Abraham wanted the "cave of Machpelah," which was owned by a rich neighbor named Ephron and he was willing to pay the full asking price of 400 shekels (an enormous price) without quibbling, in order to secure a "deed" and clear uncontested ownership of it and the surrounding land! (Can you really place a material value on gaining possession of the "promised land?")

Most significantly, Abraham, by purchasing the cave of Machpelah and the surrounding land, demonstrates his belief in God's promises, and his commitment to "having a stake" for his descendants' future in the Land of Canaan, the "promised land"! He could have decided to return to his family's homeland in Mesopotamia, which would be the "normal" human thing to do! But he determined, by faith, to remain in the place where God had called him! And so we see Abraham, the man of faith, near the end of his life, now strong in his faith and trust in God!

Well, Genesis 24 offers another test of Abraham's faith! It starts off by noting that "the Lord had blessed Abraham in every way!" (Wow! What a legacy!) And now, true to form, Abraham was concerned about the future and, specifically, a wife for Isaac (the "heir" of promise)--and "not one from the daughters of the Canaanites among whom I live"! And so we're introduced to our third person in this study: Abraham's trusted servant, possibly Eliezer (Scripture does not provide a name), to whom Abraham gives a crucial mission: to journey back to Mesopotamia where his family resides, where he wouldn't allow Isaac to go, and find a suitable wife for Isaac!

It's a beautiful love story! But the focus for the moment is on Abraham's servant, who Genesis 24:1 says, "had charge of all that Abraham owned"! Wow! (Interestingly, Genesis 15:4 notes that, before the birth of Isaac, it was Eliezer who at that point was the "heir of Abraham's house"!)

What a wonderful story about Abraham's "good and faithful servant"! You have to read it over again to fully appreciate his commitment to Abraham, his earthly master, and his trust in God for his sacred task! His prayer to God, in verses 12-15, is one gem! It had all of the ingredients of the "recipe for prayer," cited by Jesse in his sermon on January 27th (if you might remember)! A prayer of passion, and precision, and purpose! And, most significantly, praying and "submitting to God for His will to come"! And, wouldn't you know, Rebekah (the fourth person in our lesson), "very beautiful and a virgin," just happens to show up, "just outside the city at the well of water," just as Abraham's servant finished "speaking to God"! (Ever experienced God working that way in your life?)

You know the rest of the story! How Rebekah responded--with extraordinary grace and resourcefulness--not only in giving Abraham's servant a drink of cold, refreshing water but then "running back to the well to draw water for all 10 camels" (which can consume up to 40 gallons each!) I love vs. 21 which portrays Abraham's servant "gazing at her in silence to know whether the Lord had made his journey successful"--and whether this "wonder woman" would be God's choice!

And of course it was! But it wasn't to happen until Abraham's servant "took out the gold ring," and found out whose daughter she was, and "bowed low and worshiped the Lord"! His prayer, in verse 27, is so revealing of his faith: "Blessed be the Lord, the God of my master Abraham, who has not forsaken His lovingkindness and His truth toward my master; as for me, the Lord guided in the way to the house of my master's brothers!"

And so, Rebekah "ran (again) and told her mother's household about these things..." and Abraham's servant (trying to catch up!) was greeted by Rebekah's brother Laban (who we'll learn more about in upcoming lessons) who welcomed him with the words: "Come in, blessed of the Lord!"

Well, Abraham's servant proceeded to tell the whole story about how God had "greatly blessed" his master Abraham, and about Sarah bearing Isaac in her old age, and about how Abraham didn't want Isaac to "take a wife from the daughters of the Canaanites," etc. etc. The whole story! (Abraham's servant seemed to "love to tell the story," which he will repeat again to all who will listen!)

The bottom line is that Rebekah's family soon realized (so says verse 50) that "the matter comes from the Lord"--and they decided to allow Abraham's servant to take Rebekah "to be the wife of your master's son, as the Lord has spoken"!

And so, Abraham's servant was ready and raring to proceed with the journey back to Hebron to complete his mission--and so asked to be sent off! But then Laban and Rebekah's mother responded the way you might expect: "Let the girl stay with us a few days? Maybe ten?" Ooops! Plan delayed? (Imagine if it had been Isaac there!) But after Abraham's servant's insistence that they go right away, the family left it up to Rebekah, and her reply (thank God!) was "I will go!" Telling us more about this beautiful, resourceful, soon-to-be bride, Rebekah!

So they're off with the whole aggregation! And, before too many days they arrived near their destination and who should appear but Isaac (the fifth character in our story) who "just happened" to be returning from his visit to Beerlahairoi (the place where God had appeared to Hagar years before). Isaac (just speculating this!) may have gone there to pray for success of Abraham's servant's mission to Mesopotamia!

Abraham's servant then shared with Isaac "all the things that he had done" and the next thing we read is that "Isaac brought Rebekah to his mother Sarah's tent, and he took her and she became his wife, and he loved her..." (Genesis 24:67) He was the "heir" of God's promise and she became the "new matriarch"! It was truly a marriage made in heaven!

Proverbs 18:22 says: "He who finds a wife finds a good thing, and obtains favor with God!"

And so, our glimpse into the lives of the five special "people of God," recorded in Genesis 23-24, culminates with a beautiful love story and a marriage one could say "made in heaven"! And we're impressed with the godly lives and conduct of all five people contributing in some way to the outcome with Isaac taking his place in the lineage of Christ! But, ultimately, it's all about a sovereign God working behind the scenes to accomplish His eternal plan! And, even more so, a "picture" of the greatest love story of all: God in sending His Son into the world to provide redemption for mankind--which incidentally, according to Revelation 19, will one day result in a great wedding ceremony to take place between Christ and His bride, the church, made up of all the redeemed of all ages! Talk about a great love story and a marriage made in heaven!

There's an old hymn with a few of the words that captures the essence of this beautiful story:

"The love of God is greater far, than tongues or pen can ever tell! It goes beyond the highest star, and reaches to the lowest hell! O love of God, how rich and pure! How measureless and strong! It shall forevermore endure; the saints and angels' song... (There's more but you get the "picture"!)

Men, go with God this week and be blessing! (And spread a little love!)

Lowell