



FINDING A BRIDE FOR ISAAC

Genesis 24–25:18

Abraham's effort to find a wife for Isaac illustrates a great truth: We are to obey God and act responsibly, but He accomplishes His purposes in His way. This is not only an incentive for faithfulness but also a comfort to us when His work is not immediately seen.

I love to watch the suspense that builds during an Olympic relay race. If a team is to win the race, each runner must carry the baton and then smoothly pass it along to the next runner.

Well here in Genesis chapter 24, we witness the passing of the baton, and it's going to be a clean handoff of God's covenant promises from Abraham to his son Isaac.

Now don't misunderstand; the only hope for a clean handoff ultimately rests in the providence of God. Providence refers to God's work of moving everything into place so that His promises are fulfilled at just the right time, in the right way, for the right reason, involving the right people. You could write in your Bibles above Genesis chapters 24 and 25, "The Providence of God."

Genesis 24 opens by telling us that Abraham is "well advanced in years." He's just buried his wife, Sarah, and his forty-year-old son Isaac is a single man.

Now if God's promises are going to pass on to Isaac and his children, Isaac obviously needs a wife. So, Abraham calls for his chief of staff, so to speak, his household administrator, Eliezer (Genesis 15:2), to go on a mission to find a wife for Isaac from their extended family and certainly *not* from among the unbelieving Canaanites.

Eliezer asks Abraham what he's to do if the woman he finds refuses to come back with him. Abraham answers here in verse 7:

The God of heaven ... will send his angel before you, and you shall take a wife for my son from there.



One of the earliest known depictions of a camel.



In other words, he's saying, "We're going to set sail, but we're going to let God steer the boat."

So, Eliezer leaves the promised land and travels back to the region of Abraham's family. And here we see the providence of God at work.

He arrives at a watering hole used by the townspeople, and he prays:

"O LORD ... I am standing by the spring of water, and the daughters of the men of the city are coming out to draw water. Let the young woman to whom I shall say, 'Please let down your jar that I may drink,' and who shall say, 'Drink, and I will water your camels'—let her be the one whom you have appointed for your servant Isaac." (verses 12-14)

And what happens? "Before he had finished speaking, behold, Rebekah . . . came out" (verse 15). Don't you wish all your prayers were answered that quickly? Rebekah does exactly what Eliezer just prayed the woman of God's choice would do as a sign from God.

As soon as Rebekah finishes watering the camels, he gives her some gifts and then asks her about her family. And in verse 24 Rebekah informs Eliezer that she isn't just a member of Abraham's tribe; she's the daughter of Abraham's nephew, Bethuel.

And Eliezer just breaks out into a little worship dance here in verse 27:

"Blessed be the LORD, the God of my master Abraham ... the LORD has led me in the way to the house of my master's kinsmen."

Now notice the providence of God here. He's led Eliezer to the right place, at the right time, and to the right person.

Well, Rebekah runs home and brings back her brother Laban, who invites Eliezer home for dinner. But he refuses to eat one bite until he informs them of his mission.

From verse 34 through verse 49, he retells all the details that have led him to the point of meeting Rebekah. And by the way, as Eliezer delivers his account, he emphasizes at several places that this was the providential work of God

So, what's her father's reaction? Well, you husbands probably remember meeting your future bride's father and how you swallowed the lump in your throat as you asked him if you could marry his daughter. I followed my future father-in-law down into the basement where I could get him alone. Fortunately, Mr. Gladney said that I could indeed marry his daughter Marsha, and she's been my bride now for forty plus years.

*The providence of
God is evident
in all this.*

In verse 50, Bethuel, along with Laban, agree to the proposal, and in no time Eliezer and Rebekah take off for her future home in the land of promise.

We're not given many details, but it appears it was love at first sight for Isaac. We're told in verse 67 that Isaac took Rebekah as his wife and "loved her."

The providence of God is evident in all this, and it doesn't end with a wedding. Look at chapter 25 and verse 8:

Abraham breathed his last and died in a good old age, an old



man and full of years, and was gathered to his people.

In Genesis 15:15, God had promised Abraham he would live to “a good old age,” and God’s faithfulness to His promise never wavered.

Genesis 25:9-10 tells us, “Isaac and Ishmael his sons buried him in the cave of Machpelah . . . with Sarah his wife.” This cave is in the land God promised to Abraham a hundred years earlier! How long have you been waiting on the promises of God? We would all like God’s answers to arrive like they did for Eliezer—while he was still praying. But for Abraham, it took a hundred years to see this piece of God’s puzzle put into place—and the puzzle still isn’t finished being put together.

Now as you’re waiting on the Lord, don’t just sit around doing nothing.

Let me point out four different tools we need to be using as we wait on God to providentially fulfill His plans for us at the right time, in the right way, and for the right reason.

The first tool to activate is *faith*. When Eliezer asks Abraham what he should do if the woman he finds refuses to come back with him, Abraham responds in faith, saying they’re just going to trust that the Lord will go before him.

In other words, do what you’re supposed to do, and leave the rest to God. As Hudson Taylor, the great missionary said, “If you are simply obeying the Lord, all the responsibility will rest on Him, not on you!”¹

The second tool to activate is *prayer*. When Eliezer reaches Abraham’s hometown, he prays specifically, boldly, and with humility, “Lord, make Your will clearly known to me, so that I can obey You.”

The third tool to activate is *worship*. After God reveals that Rebekah is the one for Isaac, Eliezer stops and worships God. So often we get some answer to prayer and we want to call somebody or print the story in the church newsletter without even stopping to thank God and worship Him.

The fourth tool to activate is *obedience*. Eliezer is obedient to Abraham; Abraham is obedient to God. But what about Rebekah? We often overlook her courageous obedience. Even through her family wants Eliezer to delay returning with her for at least ten days, Eliezer wants to leave the day following his arrival. Finally, the family asks Rebekah if she’s willing to go this soon. Can you imagine leaving your family, friends—your world—to go with someone you met just the day before? I love her response in chapter 24 and verse 58; she replies with three simple words: “I will go.”

While you’re waiting on the Lord’s clear providential leading, my friend, you can stay busy with these four tools: faith, prayer, worship, and obedience.

Maybe this is the perfect time for you to unlock that toolbox in your heart and get busy using these tools for the glory of God.

What encouragement do you find in knowing God is always providentially at work in the world?

How have you seen God’s providence at work in your life?

¹ A. J. Broomhall, *Hudson Taylor and China’s Open Century, Book Three: If I Had a Thousand Lives* (Overseas Missionary Fellowship, 1982), 454.

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