

NOON BIBLE STUDY: GENESIS 24

GENESIS 24:1-9 - ABRAHAM WANTS TO FIND A WIFE FOR ISAAC

ABRAHAM IS GETTING OLDER (V. 1) AND AFTER THE PASSING OF HIS WIFE SARAH (GENESIS 23) HE LOOKED AHEAD TO ENSURING HIS SON, ISAAC, HAS A WIFE. THIS IS IMPORTANT IN LIGHT OF THE ABRAHAMIC COVENANT IN GENERAL BUT ALSO FOR THE FATHERLY HEART OF ABRAHAM TOWARDS HIS SON.

ABRAHAM WILL SEND A SERVANT BACK TO THE LAND OF "MY COUNTRY AND TO MY RELATIVES" (V. 4), WHICH WE WILL SOON LEARN IS BACK TO MESOPOTAMIA WHERE ABRAHAM INITIALLY LEFT WHEN GOD CALLED HIM TO CANAAN. HE DOES NOT WANT ISAAC TO MARRY A CANAANITE WOMAN.

"PLACE YOUR HAND UNDER MY THIGH" - THIS IS A CURIOUS PHRASE THAT IS A PART OF ABRAHAM'S CHARGE TO HIS SERVANT. HERE'S WHAT THE ESV STUDY BIBLE HAS TO SAY:

"SINCE STRIKING ONE'S THIGH WAS POSSIBLY UNDERSTOOD AS A SIGN OF REMORSE AND SUBMISSION (SEE JER. 31:19; EZEK. 21:12), THE PLACING OF ONE'S HAND UNDER THE THIGH OF ANOTHER MAY HAVE INDICATED SUBMISSION TO THAT PERSON'S STRENGTH AND AUTHORITY. IN ANY CASE, BY UNDERTAKING THIS ACTION, THE SERVANT BINDS HIMSELF TO OBEY ABRAHAM'S REQUEST."

OTHER COMMENTATORS SUGGEST THAT IT WAS A PLACE OF CLOSENESS/INTIMACY, INDICATING THE SERIOUSNESS OF THE REQUEST (SEE DEREK KINDER "GENESIS" PG. 157)

THE UNNAMED CHIEF SERVANT DISCUSSES THE LOGISTICS WITH ABRAHAM. HE IS TO NOT BRING ISAAC BACK TO THE LAND UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES AND IF THE WOMAN WILL NOT COME BACK WITH THE SERVANT, THE SERVANT WILL NOT BE HELD RESPONSIBLE BY ABRAHAM. AND WITH THAT, THE SERVANT WILL EMBARK ON THIS ADVENTURE.

GENESIS 24:10-14 - THE SERVANT'S REQUEST OF THE LORD

UPON HIS ARRIVAL TO THE LAND AND CITY OF NAHOR (ABRAHAM'S BROTHER), THE SERVANT STOPS AT A WELL AT THE END OF THE DAY. REMEMBER, THIS IS QUITE THE TASK UPON THE SERVANT'S SHOULDER. TRAVEL TO A DISTANT LAND AND CONVINCE A RELATIVE TO SEND THEIR DAUGHTER BACK TO CANAAN TO MARRY SOMEONE (ISAAC) THEY NEVER MET. AND, ALL THIS IS AT THE REQUEST OF A SERVANT OF A MAN (ABRAHAM) WHO HASN'T BEEN BACK TO THIS REGION IN DECADES!

ONE CAN SEE WHY THE SERVANT BESEECHES THE LORD BEFORE HE EMBARKS ON THIS TASK. HE REVERENTIALLY ADDRESS TO THE LORD AND ASKS HIM TO ESSENTIALLY SHOW HIM A "SIGN". AS HE WAITS AT THE WELL HE PRAYS THAT HE COULD KNOW WHO THE BRIDE TO BE IS BASED ON HOW SHE INTERACTS WITH HIM. HEAR AGAIN WHAT HE SAYS:

GENESIS 24:14 (NLT) - THIS IS MY REQUEST. I WILL ASK ONE OF THEM, 'PLEASE GIVE ME A DRINK FROM YOUR JUG.' IF SHE SAYS, 'YES, HAVE A DRINK, AND I WILL WATER YOUR CAMELS, TOO!'-- LET HER BE THE ONE YOU HAVE SELECTED AS ISAAC'S WIFE. THIS IS HOW I WILL KNOW THAT YOU HAVE SHOWN UNFAILING LOVE TO MY MASTER."

GENESIS 24:15-21 - REBEKAH

WELL, WELL, WELL. THE SERVANT'S PRAYER IS HEARD AND ONE OF THE WOMEN DOES JUST WHAT HE ASKED OF THE LORD! CAN YOU IMAGINE THE JOY LEAPING IN THE SERVANT'S HEART AS THESE THINGS BEGIN TO UNFOLD?! NOT ONLY DOES ONE OF THE WOMEN GIVE HIM SOME WATER, BUT SHE ALSO OFFERS WATER TO THE CAMEL. BUT, SHE'S ALSO HAPPENS TO BE AN UNMARRIED VIRGIN, (WHO IS ALSO "VERY BEAUTIFUL")! AND IF THAT WEREN'T ENOUGH OF A MIRACLE - SHE IS A RELATIVE OF ABRAHAM'S BROTHER - CHECKING ALL OF THE BOXES OF ABRAHAM'S REQUEST! THESE ARE THINGS ARE KNOWN TO US, BUT ALL THE DETAILS ARE ABOUT TO BE REVEALED TO THE SERVANT TOO IN REAL TIME.

GENESIS 24:22-27 - THE SERVANT WORSHIPS

THE REJOICING SERVANT OF ABRAHAM RESPONDS BY REQUESTING HOSPITALITY BY REBEKAH AND HER FAMILY. WHEN HE LEARNS OF ALL THE WAYS THAT THE LORD HAS HEARD HIS PRAYERS - HE CAN'T HELP BUT WORSHIP AND BLESS THE LORD!

WE KNOW FROM NEW TESTAMENT TEACHING THAT IT'S NOT WISE TO ASK FOR A SIGN AS A PREREQUISITE FOR OUR OBEDIENCE OR FAITH. WE SHOULD TRUST THE LORD AND OBEY HIS WORD. BUT WE (HOPEFULLY) HAVE ALL HAD MOMENTS LIKE THIS WHERE GOD MEETS OUR NEED, ANSWERS OUR PRAYER, OR DIRECTS OUR SITUATION AND CIRCUMSTANCES TO BE IN THE RIGHT PLACE AT THE RIGHT TIME - ALL THIS SO THAT WE STAND IN AWE OF HIS AMAZING POWER AND WISDOM!

GENESIS 24:28-33 - THE SERVANT COMES TO DINNER

ABRAHAM'S SERVANT IS INVITED HOME WITH REBEKAH AND IS GREETED BY LABAN, REBEKAH'S BROTHER. HEARING THE STORY OF HOW THE SERVANT HONORED REBEKAH, LABAN WELCOMES THE SERVANT TO DINNER. BEFORE THE SERVANT EATS, HE STOPS AND BEGINS TO RECOUNT TO THE FAMILY THE PURPOSE OF HIS VISIT.

GENESIS 24:34-49 - THE SERVANT SHARES HIS STORY

THE SERVANT SHARES THE ENTIRE DETAILED STORY WITH LABAN AND REBEKAH'S FAMILY. IT IS INTERESTING TO NOTE THAT THE TESTIMONY OF THE ANSWERED PRAYER (REGARDING WOMEN WATERING THE CAMELS) WAS THE COMPELLING PART OF THE STORY. FOR THE SERVANT, SHARING THIS PART OF THE STORY WAS CRITICAL - FOR IT WAS CONFIRMATION OF THE LORD'S HAND IN THIS SITUATION.

AND AFTER SHARING THE STORY, THE SERVANT ASKS LABAN IF HE IS WILLING AGREE TO ABRAHAM'S REQUEST.

GENESIS 24:50-51 - LABAN'S RESPONSE

LABAN BASICALLY RESPONDS TO THE SERVANT WITH "WELL, WHAT AM I GOING TO SAY AFTER THAT! IT'S CLEAR GOD IS THE ONE WORKING IN THIS SITUATION." AND WITH THAT HE AGREES TO GIVE REBEKAH TO BE ISAAC'S WIFE!

GENESIS 24:52-61 - "SLEEPING ON IT" DOESN'T CHANGE THE PLAN

THE EVENT FILLED DAY ENDS AND EVERYONE GOES TO BED WITH A PLAN TO SEND REBEKAH BACK WITH THE SERVANT IN THE MORNING.

WHEN EVERYONE WAKES UP, THE QUICK PACE OF HOW THIS ALL UNFOLDED HITS LABAN AND HIS MOM. THEY WONDER "MAYBE REBEKAH SHOULD STAY WITH US FOR ANOTHER WEEK OR SO, SO THAT WE CAN SAY OUR GOODBYES AND MAKE SURE THIS IS REALLY THE RIGHT THING".

(SIDE NOTE: OH HOW THAT IS SOMETHING I CAN TOTALLY SYMPATHIZE WITH! SOMETIMES GOD WORKS SO QUICKLY AND IN SUCH POWERFUL WAYS, WHEN THINGS FINALLY HIT YOU YOU WONDER IF IT'S TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE...)

THE SERVANT RESPONDS FIRMLY AND REBEKAH, WHO WE LEARN IS A WONDERFUL AND SIMPLE WOMAN OF FAITH HERSELF, AGREES TO LEAVE IMMEDIATELY. A FINAL BLESSING FROM HER FAMILY, AND OFF THEY GO.

(SIDE NOTE 2: AND WHAT A BLESSING IT WAS. THE POWER OF BLESSING IS/WILL BE A THEME OF THE REMAINING CHAPTERS OF GENESIS. IN THIS CASE, THE WORDS THEY SPEAK OVER REBEKAH ARE PROPHETICALLY TRUE ABOUT HER FUTURE AS THE WIFE OF ABRAHAM'S SON).

GENESIS 24:62-67 - ISAAC AND REBEKAH MEET

A SWEET INTRODUCTION FOR ISAAC AND REBEKAH AS THEY MEET FOR THE FIRST TIME AND BECOME HUSBAND AND WIFE. THE SERVANT TOLD ISAAC ALL THAT HAD (MIRACULOUSLY) HAPPENED AND SURELY THIS BLEW ISAAC AWAY. I WOULD IMAGINE FOR THE YEARS TO COME, RECOGNIZING GOD'S HAND IN THEIR UNION WOULD HAVE BROUGHT THEM BOTH GREAT COMFORT AND ENCOURAGEMENT. IT SURELY BROUGHT THESE THINGS TO YOUNG ISAAC'S HEART, WHO IS NOW FOCUSED ON HIS BEAUTIFUL WIFE AND MOVES ON WITH COMFORT AFTER THE DEATH OF HIS MOTHER.

ALL OF GENESIS 24 IS A PRETTY COOL STORY. ABRAHAM'S HEART FOR HIS SON, GOD'S PROVISION FOR THE SERVANT AND THE BEAUTIFUL AND LOVE INSPIRING STORY OF ISAAC AND REBEKAH. AS WE FINISH THE CHAPTER WITH WARM FUZZY FEELINGS, LET'S REFLECT ON ONE SPECIAL TAKE AWAY THAT IS PARTICULARLY RELEVANT FOR US TODAY.

THAT TAKEAWAY IS REGARDING THE POWER OF TESTIMONY. AS WE READ THE STORY OF REBEKAH BEING A SPECIFIC AND EXACT ANSWER TO THE SERVANT'S PRAYER AT THE WELL, WE REJOICED. IT'S AWESOME WHEN GOD ANSWERS PRAYER. BUT GOD DID MORE THAN JUST ANSWER THE SERVANT'S PRAYER TO BUILD UP HIS OWN FAITH - IT WAS THE ANSWERED PRAYER AND THE ACCOMPANYING TESTIMONY OF THAT ANSWERED PRAYER THAT THE LORD USED TO CONVINCE LABAN TO SEND HIS SISTER TO ISAAC. THAT'S WHERE THE POWER OF GOD IS ON DISPLAY IN A BROADER WAY.

IT WAS THE SERVANT'S TESTIMONY THAT LABAN COULD NOT DISPUTE. IT WAS THE TELLING OF WHAT GOD HAD DONE THAT CONVINCED LABAN TO BELIEVE THAT GOD WAS ORCHESTRATING THE ENTIRE EVENT. I CAN'T IMAGINE LABAN AGREEING TO GIVE REBEKAH TO UNKNOWN AND UNSEEN ISAAC IF THE SERVANT HAD SIMPLY JUST KNOCKED ON THEIR DOOR WHEN HE FIRST ARRIVED AND SAY "UH...HI...I'M HERE TO TAKE YOUR SISTER TO A FAR AWAY LAND TO MARRY MY MASTER'S SON..."

MAKE NO MISTAKE, THIS WASN'T JUST SOME FLIPPANT "GOD TOLD ME SUCH AND SUCH" SO YOU HAVE TO BELIEVE ME. THAT'S OFTEN IMMATURE AND USED FOR EMOTIONAL MANIPULATION OF OTHERS. YOU CAN'T JUST SAY "GOD TOLD ME XYZ" AND EXPECT EVERYONE TO JUST GO ALONG WITH WHAT YOU'RE PROPOSING.

WE LIVE IN A TIME WHERE THAT HAPPENS TOO OFTEN AND IS TOO OFTEN PROVEN WRONG. WE ARE NOT TALKING ABOUT BEING GUIDED BY FEELINGS, INTUITION AND MERE COINCIDENCE - WE ARE TALKING ABOUT SITUATIONS THAT ARE ONLY POSSIBLE WITH GOD'S INVOLVEMENT. THE STORY OF GENESIS 24 IS A SIMPLE STORY OF INDIVIDUALS WHO BELIEVED THE WORD OF THE SERVANT WHEN HE SAID "THIS IS WHAT I PRAYED FOR AND THIS IS PRECISELY WHAT HAPPENED." THAT WAS A COMPELLING ENOUGH REASON FOR LABAN TO GIVE HIS SISTER'S HAND IN MARRIAGE TO UNSEEN ISAAC BECAUSE THEY WERE LIVING IN A TIME AND CULTURE WHERE WORDS HAD POWER AND MATTERED.

UNFORTUNATELY THAT IS RARELY TRUE IN OUR DAY. OUR SOCIETY LACKS INTEGRITY AND SKEPTICISM, ESPECIALLY WHEN IT COMES TO SPIRITUAL MATTERS IS HIGH. SO YOUR WORD ALONE MIGHT NOT BE BELIEVABLE (HOWEVER, THAT'S NOT A REASON TO NOT BE HONEST AND WORK TIRELESSLY TO MAINTAIN YOUR INTEGRITY).

THAT BEING SAID - THERE IS REMARKABLE POWER IN TESTIMONY AND ANSWERED PRAYER - ESPECIALLY AMONG PEOPLE WHO KNOW YOU. PEOPLE MAY ARGUE WHETHER OR NOT THE BIBLE IS TRUE OR DISPUTE FACTS OF WHETHER JESUS ROSE FROM THE DEAD ON EASTER SUNDAY, OR NOT. BUT IF YOUR LIFE HAS BEEN TRANSFORMED BECAUSE OF YOUR FAITH IN CHRIST, YOU CAN'T ARGUE WITH THAT. IF YOU WERE FILLED WITH ANGER AND RAGE AND NOW HAVE PEACE THAT PASSES UNDERSTANDING, YOU CAN'T DISPUTE THAT. IF YOU WERE IN BONDAGE TO ADDICTION AND ARE NOW FREE, YOU CAN'T ARGUE ABOUT THAT. IF YOU WERE SICK AND NOW YOU'RE HEALED, FOLKS MAY NOT UNDERSTAND IT, BUT THEY CAN'T DENY IT.

OUR CALL TO MAKE DISCIPLES IS NOT FOUNDED ON TALKING ABOUT SIGNS, MIRACLES AND WONDERS ALL DAY. NO ONE GETS SAVED BECAUSE THEY ARE SUPERNATURALLY HEALED. THE POWER TO SAVE MEN AND WOMEN IS IN THE GOSPEL ALONE. IF YOU NEVER HAVE A PRAYER ANSWERED AND NEVER SEE OR HEAR OF A MIRACLE, THE GOSPEL STILL HAS THE POWER OF GOD FOR SALVATION.

BUT, THE LIVING AND EVERLASTING GOD *DOES* STILL WORK IN OUR DAY AND TIME TO CONFIRM THE PREACHING OF HIS GOOD NEWS. WE DON'T SEEK THE SIGNS, BUT AS WE GO ABOUT OUR LIVES JOINING GOD IN WHAT HE IS DOING IN THE WORLD WE SURELY WILL EXPERIENCE HIM.

AND AS WE DO, WE GIVE "EVIDENCE" TO THE TRUTH THAT WE SPEAK ABOUT AND LIVE IN LIGHT OF. AND THERE IS GREAT POWER IN THAT EVIDENCE TO TURN THE HEARTS OF THE PEOPLE AROUND US WHO CANNOT SEE...YET.