

## Isaac, Rebekah, and Abraham's Trusted Servant

Our narrative comes to the second of the great Hebrew patriarchs, Isaac. When Jesus taught the Sadducees about the resurrection, He asked them if they had not read, "I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living (Matthew 22:31)." Jesus bestows upon Isaac the same honor as was given to his father. Interestingly, we find the chronicle of Isaac is far less detailed than that of Abraham.

Nevertheless, we can identify at least three important aspects of Isaac's life. First, we find in Genesis 26:2-4 that God transfers to Isaac the promise made to Abraham. He promises Isaac that He will "make your descendants multiply as the stars of heaven... and in your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed (26:4)." God further states that the foundation for the great promises to his father was "because Abraham obeyed My voice and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws (26:5)." By implication the same was expected from Isaac. Second, the balance of chapter 26 outlines a progression of events that very much paralleled the life of his father, even to the flaw of, when fearing for his life, passing his wife Rebekah off as his sister (26:6-11). The third event of note is one that we have previously considered when God tested Abraham's faith by calling for Isaac's sacrifice. The text records that when they went up the mountain to make the sacrifice that "Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on Isaac... (22:6)." In that Abraham was already an old man when Isaac was born and Isaac, by carrying the wood, was more than a mere child, Isaac could have resisted his father's preparations to sacrifice him. Isaac trusted his father and his father's God, implying that Isaac was a man very much after his father's character.

Another interesting figure that plays an important role is Abraham's trusted servant. In chapter 24 we find that Abraham "was old, well advanced in age." He calls for the "oldest servant of his house, who ruled over all that he had (22:2)" and entrusts him with the mission of finding a wife for his son from among Abraham's relations in Ur. Several things about the servant are noteworthy. First, the servant remains unnamed. Second, the servant obeys without question or complaint and allows nothing to deter him from the completion of his task. After the servant had traveled far and tended to his camels and to the men who traveled with him, food was offered to him by Abraham's relatives. Genesis 22:33 records that the servant refused to eat "until I have told about my errand." Furthermore, when Rebekah agreed to return with the servant to become Isaac's wife, Rebekah's brother and mother requested a ten day period before her departure. The servant responded "Do not hinder me, since the Lord has prospered my way; send me away so that I may go to my master (24:56)." Third, at each completed juncture in the mission, the servant bowed down and worshipped the Lord (24:26, 52). Lastly, the servant devised a plan utilizing water for finding the appropriate woman to be Isaac's bride. He asked God, "Now 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 (24:14).” We will see soon that this water test has symbolic meaning for the Christian era.

The third figure in this account is Rebekah. In Rebekah we find a young bride-to-be that exhibits certain interesting characteristics also. First, she responds favorably to the water test of the servant. Second, when she is called to become Isaac’s wife, a man that she has never met, she not only accepts, but accepts without hesitation. She immediately leaves behind all that she has ever known to follow the one who is to be her husband for the rest of her years. Third, as Rebekah nears her new home and her future husband is pointed out to her, she covers herself with a veil before she approaches him (24:62-65). Lastly, we find that Isaac “brought her into his mother Sarah’s tent; and... she became his wife, and he loved her (24:67).”

We have here a condensed account of an already condensed account that takes place among real people at a real point in history. Under God’s direction these events become more than isolated experiences among strange and distant people. Under the umbrella of Divine purpose they become symbols and foreshadows for our understanding of God and His will for us. In our next article we will consider the significance of these sketchy accounts of Abraham, Isaac, the servant, and Rebekah. [No new reading for next time]