

Meaning In Old Testament Histories

When one is unfamiliar with the Bible, his journey through the text can often be as confusing as enlightening. Even those who are familiar with the Bible can miss much of its message because they are not looking for the big picture. It is not merely the more cryptic passages of poetry, prophecy, and apocalyptic literature that can be hard to understand. If one does not see a unified Divine purpose in the biblical account, even the import of the historical text can be lost. The problem lies largely in the way we look at the Bible. Men look at the text after the manner in which men write, and interpret the message by the way men think. As a result the Bible often appears confusing or disconnected.

We have been considering the accounts of Abraham, Isaac, Abraham's servant, and Isaac's wife, Rebekah. While we understand that Genesis is a historical account of real people who lived in real time and in real places, the stories are so abbreviated that they appear as highly truncated and vaguely related biographical sketches. The reason is that the underlying message is not about these people and the experiences they had. The message is about God. The details we might desire to know about them are subordinate to information revealed about God through them. Since the Bible, above all else, relates something about God and illustrates truths about Him, we now have to consider what the message of Abraham, Isaac, Abraham's servant, and Rebekah is for mankind.

In a previous article we noted the incredible trust that Abraham placed in God when he proceeded, according to God's command, to sacrifice his only son. We also noted by Abraham's great age and Isaac's youthful strength, Isaac's willingness to submit to that sacrifice. In Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son, we see a foreshadow of God's ultimate work with the world, the sacrifice of His Son for mankind. We also see in Isaac's submission to his father's will, a foreshadow of Jesus Christ's willingness to submit Himself as an atoning sacrifice for the sins of men. Thus, Abraham becomes what we refer to as a type for God and Isaac a type for Christ. This perception is reinforced when we note that scholars believe that the mountain where Abraham went to sacrifice his son was on or near the hill of Calvary.

When we look at the account of Abraham's trusted servant we find another parallel, this one with the Holy Spirit in the New Testament. Seeing Abraham as a type for God and Isaac a type for Christ, the trusted servant is seen as a type for the Holy Spirit. As the trusted servant works faithfully to serve his master, his efforts parallel the Spirit's as He works faithfully to bring attention and glory, not to Himself, but to Jesus Christ. As Abraham's servant would not be deterred from his appointed duties, the Holy Spirit works in the New Testament with single-minded purpose.

Furthermore, as we see Abraham's servant pausing constantly to give thanks to God, we observe the Holy Spirit always working diligently to bring glory to God. Lastly, Abraham's servant devised a test involving water that would bring forth a bride for Isaac. When the Spirit ushered in the Christian dispensation (Acts 2), He did it through a defining,

watershed act, water baptism. This water test of the New Covenant, baptism, brings forth Christ's bride, the church, whom He "loved... and gave Himself for... (Ephesians 5:25)."

In Rebekah, we see a parallel to the church, Christ's bride. When the message comes to her that Isaac, representing Jesus Christ, desired to make her his bride, as announced by the servant who represents the Holy Spirit, Rebekah abandons all she had ever known to become Isaac's wife. As she approaches her husband she places a veil over her face that can be removed only by her husband. Christ's sacrifice on the cross removed the veil of the Old Law (Matthew 27:51) and gave His bride access to the Holy of Holies, the dwelling place of God (Hebrews 10:19). Rebekah's relationship to Isaac represents the whole body of Christians and their relationship to Christ. When the lost are called out of the world, they are required to abandon all and follow Christ. The groom leads His bride, the church, into the Holy of Holies, the dwelling place of God, to be His forever.

Remember, the message of the Bible is not about the men and events that are recorded, but is the revelation of the mind of God and His purpose in the creation that has been worked out through these men and events. These Old Testament writings prepare us to understand the New. The Apostle Paul explained this when he wrote, "Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith (Galatians 3:24)."

Read: Genesis Chapters 25 and 27-30. For a shorter reading read Genesis 25:21-30; 27:1-36; 28:1-5, 10-14; 29:15-30.]