



Genesis

Beginnings

Week 5
Chapters 22-26

A Test, A Marriage, and a Birthright

1



Proved and tested (Chapter 22)

- ❖ God tests Abraham's faithfulness (see James 1:2-4).
 - God begins the story as the *tester* and ends it as the *provider*.
 - Mt. Moriah is the site of the temple in Jerusalem.
- ❖ Abraham knows God's promises. When he heads off with Isaac, he tells the servants that they both will return. Abraham does not have a crystal ball, but he is confident in God's covenant faithfulness.
- ❖ Isaac is not passive in the story – he is willing to be laid on the altar when he could have run away.
- ❖ In the end, the way out is a *substitutionary* sacrifice.
 - There are three key passages re lambs in the OT. This one (v. 8), the Passover lamb at the Exodus, and the lamb led to slaughter in Isaiah 53. All this imagery is, of course, carried over to Jesus.
 - Sacrifice was about giving over to God what was of the highest worth in the celebration and restoration of relationship.
- ❖ We can't really profess to know God's intent in this, but what does it reveal to us about Abraham, ourselves, and the covenant? Only the book of Job contains a test as severe and difficult to understand as this one.

©2005 Scott L. Engle



The funeral of a princess (Chapter 23)

- ❖ When Sarah dies (at 127!), Abraham must find a suitable burial place in an area controlled by Hittites.
- ❖ The locals know Abraham (remember his military victory) and want to accord him and Sarah the privileges of a prince and princess.
- ❖ The burial place chosen by Abraham is a large cave.
 - There was a large structure erected there in the days of Herod over what is probably the authentic burial place.
 - The negotiation over the price of the cave was typical for the near-eastern ancient cultures. Notice how Ephron manages to slip in a price even while “offering” the cave for free. The price is exorbitant – 20x what will be paid for Joseph.

©2005 Scott L. Engle



Finding a wife for Isaac (Chapter 24)

- ❖ Abraham’s senior servant is to go back and get a wife for Isaac, but, in any circumstance, Isaac is not to leave the land of the promise.
 - An act of kindness is to be the sign that the servant has the right girl.
- ❖ It is Rebekah, who is a cousin of Isaac’s – the granddaughter of Abraham’s brother.
- ❖ The servant reveals all to Laban, Rebekah’s brother, and her father.
 - The men agree that Rebekah is to go. The servant provides gifts all around.
- ❖ Rebekah’s family wants some time with the girl, but the servant wants to leave right away. Rebekah agrees to go – she is not forced into it.
- ❖ So, Rebekah and Isaac are married. And “he loves her” and finds comfort in her after the death of his mother. Isaac and Sarah must have been very close. Isaac is 37 when his mother dies.
- ❖ Nothing here is happening by accident. The Abrahamic covenant must be kept and Isaac must have a wife and, hence, children.
 - After hearing the story, Laban and Bethuel say, “This is from the Lord.” God’s work is plain for all to see. Do we sometimes chalk things up to coincidence, when they are not a coincidence at all? How would we know?

©2005 Scott L. Engle



The death of Abraham (25:1-18)

- ❖ Abraham takes another wife and has many more sons. But the covenant is Isaac's, so Abraham sends those sons away with a nice "bank account" before his death.
- ❖ Abraham is buried beside Sarah.
 - He "died at a good old age, and old man, and full of years; and he was gathered to his people."
 - This is a life and death befitting a man of such faith.
- ❖ After Abraham's death, God blesses Abraham.
- ❖ We then get caught up on Ishmael's family and told of his death. In keeping with the promise of the angel, Ishmael's family lived "in hostility" with all the tribes around them.

©2005 Scott L. Engle



Sons for Isaac and Rebekah (25:19-34)

- ❖ Rebekah has trouble getting pregnant. Their faith too will be tested.
 - Just because it might seem to us that God isn't answering our prayers of even being faithful – that doesn't make it so. Patience is one of "fruits of the Spirit" listed by Paul.
- ❖ After 19 years, Rebekah eventually does – with twins! It is a rough pregnancy, a harbinger of the struggle to come.
 - The first-born is red and hairy Esau (sounds like "hairy").
 - The second one out of the womb, grasping his brother's heel, is Jacob (means "deceives" or "supplants").
- ❖ Esau is "field and stream" but Jacob is "home and hearth."
 - Esau is Isaac's favorite but Jacob is his mother's favorite.
- ❖ Esau sells his birthright for a bowl of stew! He swears an oath to seal the deal. It cannot be undone – such is the nature of an oath.

©2005 Scott L. Engle



The Lord appears to Isaac (Chapter 26)

- ❖ This story is much like Abraham's but with a few key differences.
 - Isaac does not head to Egypt to escape the famine but to Gerar on the coastline. God confirms his decision and reiterates the promises that are now his. Note the role of Abraham's obedience (v. 5).
 - Though Isaac too names Rebekah as his sister, she never enters another's household.
 - Isn't the high level of morality in Gerar interesting. What a high penalty for having sex with another man's wife!
 - Abimelech (can't be the same one; prob. a family name) understands that Isaac is under God's protection *before* anything bad happens to him.
- ❖ Isaac's wealth grows to the point where his neighbors envy him and he is forced to leave. Like his father, Isaac pitches a tent and worships.
 - Still, Abimelech comes to him, acknowledges Isaac's special relationship with God, and seeks a treaty.

©2005 Scott L. Engle



Where is Jesus in this?

- ❖ The obvious pointer to Jesus this week is the substitutionary sacrifice on Mt. Moriah.
 - Many people find the whole notion of sacrifice offensive, but this imagery and the act of sacrifice is essential to the NT understanding of Jesus and his death on the cross. It is not the only helpful image, but it cannot be discarded.
 - Hebrews is the most difficult NT book for most Christians, precisely because it is so dependent on ancient Israelite practices of sacrifice and the role of priests.
- ❖ These stories also have a lot to say about God's providence. In the end, the renewal of the cosmos and the restoration of humanity to a right relationship with God is in God's hands and *cannot fail*. God is the great promise-maker and promise-keeper.

©2005 Scott L. Engle

