Isaac and Rebekah

Early in my career I attended a leadership retreat sponsored by USCA and my roommate was a young pastor who had recently moved to Aiken. He talked about struggling with his decision to accept the offer from the church he served. He had attractive offers from 2 churches and had to make a choice. That’s the kind of choice we like, isn’t it? Having 2 or even more options to choose from that have only upside, like going to your favorite restaurant and having to decide whether to order steak or fish when you know both are excellent. Life does not always present us with only good options, sometimes we have to choose what I refer to as the least worst option, the one with the least downside like being between a rock and a hard place. I occasionally would have that dilemma on the job and I am sure parents often face similar decisions with their children. Sadly I think choosing the least worst is what we will be doing on Nov. 3rd. Abraham had such a difficult decision to make as we see in our study of chapter 24 of Genesis.

The chapter begins with Abraham calling his most trusted servant to his side to discuss a matter of vital importance, finding a wife for his son. Abraham probably knew that his time on earth was nearing its end and he wanted to make certain that Isaac had a proper wife. Isaac would be the foundation of the prolific generations God promised to Abraham and Isaac’s wife would the mother of those generations. Abraham had lived among the Canaanites for many years and had observed their behavior. He had seen the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah which was the result of rampant sin. Abraham was living among the Canaanites because God had commanded him to do so unlike his nephew Lot who lived there by choice. When it came time to find a wife for Isaac, Abraham would not allow him to marry a native to that land. As we saw last week, Abraham saw himself as an alien having nothing in common with the locals and allowing Isaac to marry one invited disaster. Abraham decided to send his servant back to his homeland to bring back a woman from his family, an option that had its own risks. Terah who was Abraham’s father had worshipped idols which was the reason God told Abraham to leave his household (Josh. 24:2).. Abraham had lived apart from his brother Nahor for decades and did not know whether or not Nahor continued this practice. Abraham apparently had a choice between the certainty of Isaac marrying a pagan or the possibility of it. He also made sure that his servant knew that sending Isaac back to Ur was not an option since that might mean giving up the land God had promised to future generations.

Abraham’s servant made the long journey of perhaps 900 miles to reach the town of Nahor which was named for Abraham’s brother. While this chapter is about Isaac and Rebekah, much of it is devoted to Abraham’s servant whose character is revealed. Note the following:

Abraham trusted this man so much that he allowed him to choose a wife for his son. It is odd that Isaac would not choose his own wife since he was probably in his 40’s by this time. It may have been a custom at the time for the father to select his son’s bride and Abraham delegated this task to his servant.

Abraham sent with the servant an entourage of attendants, camels and jewelry. The servant could have used taken these possessions and converted them to his own use becoming a wealthy man independent from Abraham yet he chose to remain a servant.

He was devoted to Abraham, praying that God would show kindness to Abraham.

The servant had his own personal relationship with God, thanking him for granting success in is journey (v. 27h).

The servant was devoted to his assigned task. He had an opportunity to relax and enjoy the hospitality of Bethuel and Laban but declined so that he could return quickly with Rebekah. He may have also recognized that nothing good would come from spending more time than necessary with Laban.

He was devoted to Isaac, referring to him as his master. It is likely that the servant was Eliezer who was identified in chapter 15 as the senior servant who would inherit Abraham’s estate in the absence of a son. It would have been easy for Eliezer to be bitter that Isaac’s birth robbed him of the vast wealth he might have had yet he remained a faithful servant. Often in the workplace people are faced with being passed over for a promotion. Some get bitter, some get better and some have an attitude similar to Eliezer who seemed to be content with his position in life (see Heb. 13:56). I am reminded of the following quote I have shared before: We should view our circumstances through God rather than viewing God through our circumstances. The chapter ends with the marriage of Isaac and Rebekah which no doubt brought great joy to Abraham.