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We resume our study now in the book of Genesis, chapter 24. The servant successfully resists the urging of Rebecca's family to stay to Terry for some indefinite period of time, two days or ten. He says, Do not hinder me.

The Lord has prospered my way. Send me away so that I may go to my master. So they said, We will call the young woman and ask her personally.

They called Rebecca and said to her, Will you go with this man? And she said, I will go. This reminds us of Abraham when God called him and he got himself up from his country and his people and his kindred. So in verse 59, They sent away Rebecca, their sister, and her nurse, and Abraham's servant, and his men.

So you'll notice he did have some men. Obviously one guy couldn't lead ten camels. But between Rebecca and her train and the servant and his subordinates, they pack up.

The family then, in verse 60, blessed Rebecca and said to her, Our sister, may you become the mother of thousands of ten thousands, and may your descendants possess the gates of those who hate them. This is a play on words. There are many wonderful, I think the Hebrew language lends itself because of its structure to interesting word plays.

And God seems to delight in these and so do the Hebrews. So when the family blesses Rebecca and they say, Our sister, may you become the mother of thousands of ten thousands. The word for ten thousand in Hebrew is, I guess I should start out by saying the word for many is Raba, R-A-B-A.

Raba means many or to multiply. And this comes over in the number system, without going into great detail about how they construct their numbers. R-A-B-A-B-A, Rababa, it means a great many.

It means ten thousand. And so when they say, Our sister, may you become the mother. It's a play on her word.

Instead of Rebecca, you have Rababa. They say, Rebecca, may you be Rababa. May you be the mother of ten thousands.

May your descendants possess the gates of those who hate them. And these consonants, the R-A-B-A, and the ways you can mix those together, this is also a part of Abraham's name. And it is also connected with the word for blessing.

Because Barak, B-A-R-A-K, means to bless. And you have Baraka, which means blessing. And if you transpose two consonants in Rebecca's name, instead of Rebecca, you have Baraka.

And this is another conscious play on her name, that you can see in the Hebrew text here. So you have all of these concepts interwoven together, of the literal roots of her name, meaning the cord that binds together, of being flexible, flexibility implying strength. You have the idea of blessing through great numbers.

Baraka and Rababa, all of these are interwoven in her name. It's really a wonderful name. And it's one of the reasons we picked it for our daughter.

So then Rebecca and her maids, after this blessing from the family, arose and they rode on camels and followed the man. So the servant took Rebecca and departed. So they rode on the camels and followed the men.

So the men are leading the camels, the women, Rebecca and her nurse, and associated maid servants and so forth, ride the camels along with her gifts and her belongings. And they follow the servant, and the servant took Rebecca and departed. Now in verse 62, Isaac came from the way of Bir Lahai Roy.

What do we know about Bir Lahai Roy? How did it get its name? You will remember just a few chapters back, Genesis chapter 16, verse 14. You have the episode with Hagar having been cast out by Sarah because of her snide looks or whatever it was. The Lord, the angel of the Lord, appeared to Hagar in the wilderness and said, return to your mistress, this is Genesis 16, 9, submit yourself under her hand.

The angel of the Lord said to her, I will multiply your descendants exceedingly so that they shall not be counted for multitude. The place where the angel of the Lord makes this promise to Hagar is named by Hagar in verse 13 and 14. She called the name of the Lord who spoke to her, you are the God who sees.

El Roy, El is God, Roy is he who sees. She said, have I also here seen the one who sees me? Therefore the well was called Bir Lahai Roy. It is between Kadesh and Bered.

The well of the one who lives and sees. Lahai, you remember the great toast that Jewish people, they say L'Chaim. What does that mean? Well, El means two, it's the preposition, the prefix Lamed means two and Chaim is life.

This is L'Chai, the one who lives. Bir L'Chai Roy, the one who lives and who sees me. So this is the place of the living God.

He sends his messenger, he confirms a covenant promise in this place. This is where Isaac has gone. This is where Isaac is dwelling.

He is dwelling in the place of the God who lives and sees me. And this is significant because without being explicit, it tells us that Isaac is seeking God. Isaac is looking for confirmation of God's covenant promises.

Isaac is going to the place where God has appeared out in the wilderness. And interestingly, it is not the place where God appeared to his father, up in Bethel or in Hebron. It is down in the wilderness.

And this wilderness place of encounter with God is something that becomes a pattern. You find Moses is going to encounter God at the burning bush in the wilderness of Midian. It sometimes requires separation.

It sometimes requires striking out on our own, being by ourselves in a time of solitude. And we find that we have these periods in our life. We're not necessarily around other believers.

We're not in a place of fellowship and mutual support. The church today seems to be all gung-ho for support groups and come join the single formerly married parents of female children class that we have or come join our class for elderly single widowed fathers of sons. There's all these different trying to encourage fellowship with people that have something in common.

When you go to a large church, there are 16 different kinds of adult class where we're the young singles, where the young married, where the young parents, where the old parents, where the empty nest brigade, where this, that and the other trying to put people together so that they will have mutual support and have things in common. There's nothing intrinsically wrong with that. But if it becomes a substitute for relationship with God, if we are substituting social life with believers for intimacy with God, we do err.

We haven't set the priorities. We're not heeding the voice of God. We're enjoying the company of man.

And it can be wonderful company, but fellowship has to be an outgrowth and an expression of close relationship with God. We can't be a blessing to others. We can't be blessed by others unless God is the focus point.

God is the strong vertical relationship around which all of our horizontal relationships revolve. So Isaac has left his godly father, his father who is the man of faith, who has made these wonderful decisions and has learned so much. He's got to strike out and find his own relationship with God.

He's not just going to be a parasite on the side of his father's relationship. He's not just going to sit there in the place of blessing by association. He has struck out into the wilderness on his own to the place of the God who lives and sees me.

And this is important because it is from this place that he comes and meets his wife. So he came from the way of the well of the God who lives and sees me. For he dwelt in the south.

There was a man who separated from Abraham once before, wasn't there? For quite a different reason. When Lot separated from Abraham it was to go to the east. To go to the place of the pagans.

To go to Sodom and Gomorrah and the wealth and the fertile fields and so forth that he saw when he looked to the east. But this is not where Isaac goes. Isaac doesn't go look up to his uncle Lot.

He goes to the south. He goes to a place of solitude. When Hagar was there, there wasn't any civilization.

She thought they were going to die in that place because there was nobody around. This word to meditate, this is kind of a guess as to what this word means. Because it's a hop-hox in what this word means.

We sort of infer the meaning from the word to do something. Meditate is as good as anything. This could be to worship, to think, to engage in solitude.

We don't know what it is. But the interesting thing is that the servant with the camel and Rebecca and the women and the men and so forth, he returns and goes to Isaac. He doesn't go to Abraham.

Which has led some to believe that maybe Abraham had died by this time. Of course, the chronological notices about Abraham's life and his age and so forth indicate that he lived another 35 years beyond this point. But some people give that short trip and say, well, the numbers are symbolic.

By his absence and the fact that no further words are spoken by Abraham in Genesis, that he has passed away by this time. And this is why he says the servant is going to say when Rebecca, in verse 64, lifts her eyes, she sees Isaac and does not see the camel. She said to the servant, who is this man walking in the field to meet us? The servant said, it is my master.

Why doesn't he say it is my master's son, whom I told you about by the well. He says it is my master. So there are some who think that when this takes place, Abraham has died.

There is another explanation for why this takes place that I'll review with you in a moment. But Isaac is out in the field meditating. He seems to like his solitude.

He's gone to dwell in a place of solitude. He's out in the field and eating by himself in solitude. He lifted his eyes and looked.

If you remember before, like when Abraham was going up to Mount Moriah, he lifted his eyes and looked and behold, there was the mountain. Whenever you get this phrase, he lifted up his eyes and looked, this is the marker that you're looking and seeing

something significant. This is not, why are we even given the account of this meeting? Why doesn't he just say, behold, the servant brought back Rebecca and she became Isaac's wife.

We have the account of this meeting and the details of it are significant. Isaac looks up and he sees the camels coming. He sees the bride before she sees him.

He sees her first. He sees the camels coming and apparently he knows what this is. She then lifted her eyes.

You see in verse 63, Isaac lifted his eyes and looked and there, it says, It's emphatic in Hebrew. The construction of it in Hebrew says this was a really big deal. It was a surprise.

He looked up and there are the camels. So then Rebecca lifted her eyes and she saw Isaac. So you get the idea of one of these hair color commercials.

Remember, the closer you get, the better she looks type of thing. If this was done in a cinematic fashion, you would see Isaac out in a vast open field by himself, sun going down perhaps. He's out there thinking deep thoughts.

He happens to glance over and he sees camels silhouetted against the sky there, the northwestern sky. He looks up and he hears these camels coming. They're probably coming from the northwest.

He's looking to the north. The sun is setting to his left. He looks and hears these ten camels and some people, figures, silhouetted.

He looks up and it's a startling sight. Then he cut away and hears Rebecca. She looks up and hears the setting sun is revealing the figure of this tall young man in the field by himself.

She sees. So they're getting ever closer as this progresses. So when she sees him, she lifts her eyes and saw Isaac, she dismounted from the camel.

She didn't come riding up on a camel. There's a reason for this. Have you ever seen camels? Have you ever seen film or pictures of camels? They're disgusting animals.

They snort. They belt. They wheeze.

They spit. They've got these ugly brown teeth. This is not a romantic setting, you know, love amongst the camels.

So Rebecca says, I'm going to get away from the camels when I meet my prospective husband-to-be here. So as soon as she sees him, she already has surmised that this is the guy. Obviously, there's probably been some sign of recognition on the part of the

servant and so forth.

So she says, I don't want to come riding up on a camel in an ungraceful fashion. So she gets down off the camel. And you notice in verse 65, she had said to the servant, who is this man walking in the field to meet us, the servant said, it is my master.

So she took a veil and covered herself. This is standard practice. She has modesty.

She's going to keep the veil on in the presence of Isaac until the wedding night. This is a part of the mystique. This is part of trapping the man.

You don't just lay all the goods out on the table there. You put on the veil, cover yourself with a robe. And, you know, women in the ancient world knew how this whole thing worked.

So she took a veil and covered herself. And the servant, in verse 66, told Isaac all the things that he had done. And they're away from the camels.

The camels and the servants and the handmaidens and stuff, they're off away. The camels are sitting down belching and wheezing and doing all the things that they do. But here is this party where you have the bride, you have the groom, and you have the servant that brought the bride to the groom.

And he is imparting the information. He imparted information about the groom to the bride. Now he is recounting to Isaac how he came to telling this story.

You almost suspect that the author here could have told it a third time. He had the actual account. Then he had the repetition, the telling of the story to Laban.

And he could have included it again here. But we get the idea that he's going to tell the story the way that he told it to Laban to Isaac so that Isaac understands that this is, in fact, God's will. So then Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent.

She became his wife, and he loved her. So Isaac was comforted after his mother's death. This is one of the things that tells me that this is not after the death of Abraham because Isaac is still in mourning for his mother, and he is now comforted.

Obviously, you can mourn for a long time, but I think this is going to be a matter of a few years at most because it says he's comforted after his mother's tent is still up. What are they going to do? Roll this thing up and pack it around for 10 or 15, 20, 30 years? And then, oh, well, here's my wife. Let me go find Mom's old tent.

I guess this is what they did. Instead of getting out Mom's wedding gown or something, they unfurled Mom's tent and let her live in that. But you get the idea, A, that it's relatively short time after Sarah's death.

Sarah missed out on seeing her daughter-in-law and her grandkids and so forth, in this life, anyway. And you also get the idea that Abraham has not yet remarried. He has not installed anyone in Sarah's tent either.

So I think that this is just like it is in the account. It's fairly short. And there's a reason why the servant reports to Isaac and not to Abraham, and, again, we'll cover that here in a moment.

So she becomes the matriarch of the family. She takes Sarah's place. Now, the interesting thing about this, if you think about the symbolic values here of Abraham and Sarah, they are the prototypical couple.

They're the progenitors of the nation of Israel, specifically. Now, Abraham is going to be the father of many nations, but Sarah is only the mother of one nation, Isaac. She has one child, and that's it.

Hagar has one child with Abraham. We don't know if she went off and remarried later on and if Ishmael had half-brothers and sisters or not. But the point here is, if you think about the foreshadowing of later events in history, when you think about Sarah as the matriarch of the nation of Israel, God, later on in the prophetic scriptures, will picture the nation of Israel as his wife.

Israel is pictured as, in some cases, an unfaithful wife and a wife that, by rights, could have been divorced. In fact, at one point, God says, I have divorced you. But he says, I will take you back.

And this is interesting because it's in violation of the Mosaic law. The law said once you've divorced a wife, you don't take her back again as your wife. But God tells Israel later in the prophetic scriptures, I have divorced you, but return to me.

I will take you back. And it's a strong indication of the love and the place that God has in his affection and in his plan for the nation of Israel. But you have a foreshadowing or a parallelism with Abraham and Sarah and the human race in general and the nation of Israel in particular.

You will notice that it is not until Sarah dies that Isaac appears on the scene. We don't even see him coming back from the mountain of... We never see Isaac and Sarah together after the birth. When the sacrifice thing happens, the sacrifice thing takes place, Sarah is nowhere in evidence.

We don't have any mention of Isaac coming back from the mountain, although we know that he must have. She dies, and then we see Isaac moving to the south and mourning his mother. Isaac, even on the mountain, is prophetically a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ as the sacrifice.

And a picture of the Father's love for the Son is pictured in Abraham and Isaac. If Rebecca is the bride of Isaac, what does she represent in a symbolic fashion? We don't want to get into a lot of allegorical interpretation, but you can't help but see the suggestion here that Rebecca in a way foreshadows what the Church is going to be as the bride of Christ. Rebecca is not Sarah.

Rebecca is not on the scene at the same time as Sarah. Sarah dies before Rebecca comes on the scene. It isn't until after Sarah is out of the picture that the Father Abraham calls for the finding, the identifying and the calling out of the bride for his son.

And this is reflected in what we understand in dispensational theology as a relationship between the age of Israel and the age of the Church. It is after Israel has been set aside, after they have in effect become the dead branch that is snapped out of the tree, that the bride is called out. Who is the servant who goes and communicates the things of the groom to the bride? This unnamed servant, this self-effacing servant who does nothing but serve, serves the Father and the Son, is a wonderful picture of God the Holy Spirit communicating the riches and the wealth and the beneficence of both the Father and of the Son as the Father's heir to Rebecca.

And Rebecca is called out and she comes. She is united. And in this interplay, why do we have this scene with alighting from the camel and seeing the groom afar off? It's a foreshadowing, I think, of the rapture and the sequence of things that take place at the rapture.

Who is going to see whom first? When the Lord descends from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and the trump of God and the dead in Christ rise, He is going to be the first one to see. He's going to see us. He is in the air waiting for us.

And we don't push these analogies too far. We don't say, well, the... But the bride is brought up from the earth to meet the Lord in the air. Resurrection power is uniformly ascribed to God the Holy Spirit primarily in the Scripture.

And the power by which we are transformed in a moment in the twinkling of an eye and are united with the Lord Jesus Christ is going to be the same power that has accomplished everything else in our lives and is the same power that resurrected Jesus Christ from the dead. And that's the power of God the Holy Spirit. And in the same way that the servant brings Rebecca to meet Isaac, Isaac has come up from the south and in this field, in this intermediate area between where the bride has come from and where Isaac dwells in this open field, Isaac sees her first.

And then she sees him. And she comes in and he takes her to be his bride. And it's a beautiful picture of our meeting with the Lord Jesus Christ when he comes for us.

We have never seen him, but we have responded to him. We have accepted the

invitation of God through the ministry of God the Holy Spirit to enter into relationship with Christ and through him, relationship with God the Father. And the future history here is also quite fascinating when we move into chapter 25 because interestingly in chapter 25 Abraham again took a wife and her name was Kethurah.

She is a concubine. She is not of the same status as Sarah. She doesn't dwell in the tent of Sarah because Rebecca has taken that place.

Rebecca now occupies the place that Sarah once held. But Abraham takes another wife and has more offspring. The word for wife here is a different word.

You have different words used. The word used for Hagar, for example, was shifka, S-H-A-R-I-F-C-H-A-H, which means slave wife. That's what was used as well as ama, A-M-A-H, both in Genesis chapter 16 and Genesis chapter 21 referring to Hagar.

Kethurah apparently doesn't have the status either of Hagar or much less of Sarah. This word for concubine is P-Y-L-G-A-S-H, pilgash. It means concubine.

It's also used at Bilhah with reference to Jacob in Genesis 35, 22. So she has no expectation that her children are going to inherit anything from Abraham. Even Hagar's son Ishmael did not receive the inheritance.

Abraham leaves all that he has to Isaac. Isaac is the one who inherits, and he, of course, is going to share this inheritance with his wife, Rebecca, and they together are going to have this offspring. But when Abraham takes this concubine named Kethurah, she bears to him Zimron, Jokshon, Dedan, Midian, Ishbak, and Shuah.

I'm tempted to pronounce these in a Hebrew fashion because they're somewhat different. But Jokshon begot Sheba and Dedan, and the sons of Dedan were Asherim, Latushim, and La'umim. The sons of Midian were Ephah, Ephur, Hannah, Abida, and Eldahah.

All these were children of Kethurah. The interesting thing is that you notice there are two generations spoken of here. There are the eight sons.

You have Zimron, Jokshon, Dedan, Midian, Ishbak, and Shuah, which are six sons, actually. Then two of those six sons are listed as having offspring. Jokshon begets Sheba and Dedan, and then you have some grandsons from Dedan, the three mentioned there.

But then in the sons of Midian, you have five sons there. So you think, well, is there some significance to the numbers or to the names or whatever? The names, most of these names are really hard to figure out because, again, we're dealing with names that were given in the ancient Semitic days, before Hebrew, before Arabic, very, very ancient. Some of these are not found in Scripture or anything, but I'll tell you a little bit about these.

First of all, Kethurah, her name at least appears to be the feminine singular passive participle, which is a big mouthful of grammar. A participle is something that's an ongoing process. It's an ing word, a verb that turns into a noun.

It is feminine, which makes sense since it's applied to a lady. It is passive, which means this is something that comes from the outside and is an action that is received by the object. Feminine singular passive participle from Kathar, K-A-T-H-A-R, which is a verb that means to burn incense.

So she is, and because this is a passive participle, it means to give off the fragrance of incense or to burn as incense, to be set afire for incense type of thing. So some interpreters have thought this means something like veiled by the smoke of incense. It's designed to be an attractive name, a name of beauty, to evoke the idea of burning incense and of the fragrance and the pleasing aroma that incense gives off.

Incense, of course, is often used in terms of memorial. The smoke of the altar of incense is a figure for prayer, something that ascends to God and reminds God of humanity and human needs and so forth. So Kathara is taken as a wife.

Now, why does this take place? Why do we even have this record? What is the promise to Abraham? You will be fruitful. You will multiply. You will be a father of many nations.

We tend to think of Abraham as the father of Israel. You're all sons of Abraham. Well, so are all the Arabs.

All the Arabs are sons of Abraham, and there are a lot of different Arabs, and this is where a lot of them came from. It's not only Moab and Ammon. It came from Lot, as you find in the eastern regions adjoining the nation of Israel.

These nations, Zimron, for example, is mentioned in 1 Chronicles 1.32 and perhaps in Jeremiah 25 as Zimri. This is an Arabic people. Pliny, one of the ancient historians, spoke of the Zamorini, which is an Arab tribe.

Ptolemaeus mentions a town near Mecca called Zambron, which probably comes from Zimron. So this Zimron became a tribe and a segment of Arabs in that region. You have Yokshon mentioned next.

It says Jokshon here, but, of course, a J is a Y in Hebrew. No such thing as a J in that language. This is our inheritance from the Germans who were the great Hebrew scholars of the last century.

Yokshon is also mentioned in 1 Chronicles 1.32, as is Midan. These first three are mentioned in that passage. Yokshon is interesting because, if you remember back in Genesis 10, verse 28, it told us that Sheba was a son of Jokshon.

And here you have Yokshon, which is a really similar name, and both of them have a son named Sheba. So in Genesis 10.26, Jobob, of course, migrated to Texas. But, interestingly, you have that same pattern of Jokshon or Jokshon and a son named Sheba.

In Genesis 10.28, there's an Arab town by that name mentioned in the ancient literature. The same with Midan. There's an Arab town called Badana, which probably got its name from Midan.

It's mentioned in the Annals of Tiglis, Poleser III. Midian, of course, is famous in Old Testament scriptures. Exodus 3.1, Exodus chapter 18, first 24 verses of that chapter, where you have Moses marrying his wife of Midian, where he has gone to sojourn.

That's where he sees the burning bush. His father-in-law gives him good advice on delegating authority so that he doesn't have to judge every trivial case in Israel. But Midian, that started out in a close relationship with Moses and with Israel, later on becomes sort of an enemy.

And this amicable relationship was short-lived because by the time you get to Numbers 25 and Numbers 31, 1 through 12, you have the Midianites associated with the Moabites against Israel. And, of course, the Midianites are finally driven out of the land by Gideon, a story we just recently reviewed in Judges 7 and 8. The whole thing with the lamps and the pitchers and the 300 going in, they're running the Midianites out. They're descended from this Midian.

They have as their father Abraham, so they're sort of cousins of the Israelites. Yishbat, the one you have there, is mentioned in some inscriptions. It's found from Shalmaneser III.

The land of Yishbat is mentioned in those inscriptions. It's northern Syria, another region not far from Israel. Shuach.

You remember Bildad in the Book of Job? He is a descendant from Shuach, the Bildad to Shuachit. This is the region in the middle Euphrates between Babylon and Mari. Nuzi and Mari are two ancient cities that have been dug up.

There are clay tablets that have given us a lot of information about ancient civilization and ancient languages, proto-Semitic languages found there. This name Shuach is mentioned in the Mari text circa 1800 B.C., and that's just about right because Abraham himself lives around 2000 B.C., and so 200 years later we have inscriptions that mention the name of Shuach. Of course, these sons generally become tribes or peoples that bear that name, so this makes good sense to us.

You have Ashurim mentioned as one of the sons of Dedan there. These are not the Assyrians, the Ashurim of later days. This is a desert tribe of Arabs.

It's mentioned in Numbers 24-22. And again in Numbers 24-24, also mentioned in Psalm 83-8. This is an area that dwelt in the northwestern regions of Arabia.

You have the Latushim and Leumim. You'll notice all three of these, Ashurim, Latushim, and Leumim, end in I-M, and this is typically a name of a people. Like the Philistines are actually Pelishtim, ending in I-M in Hebrew.

And this is sort of the equivalent of Ait. You have the I-M and you have the Ait, and these are people from. So basically what it means is the sons of Dedan turned into these tribes, these peoples.

The sons of Midian, you have Ifar. Ifar means young gazelle. It was a town mentioned by Ashurbanipal when he was in a war with the Arabs there.

He mentions this name. You have Ifar mentioned in Isaiah 60, verse 6, along with Midian and Sheba as a source of gold and frankincense. And it's a personal name in 1 Chronicles 2-46, another place in northern Arabia.

What is the point of all this? When you study these Abida there, you may recognize Ab-E there. Ab is father, E is my, my father. And then the Da there is from Yada, which is the verb to know.

So my father has known me, or the father has known me, Abida. And Eldaha, God has called. There are two Arab kings mentioned in the ancient literature.

One is called Abiyada, which is the very same name here, Abida. And another one is called Yada'il, which is another way of saying, if you just switch around Eldaha to the first last, you have the very same name. So these also became ancient Arab kings.

Some of these are mentioned. There's an Arab tribe called the Ebidid, mentioned in the Assyrian records of ancient times. So what is the point of all of these names and tribes? The Israelites, when they get the Book of Genesis into their hands and they begin to learn this, they're going to find that their neighbors, the surrounding people, are the might have been.

Here are sons of Abraham just like themselves. What distinguishes them from all of their cousins in the surrounding regions? All of the people around them. This would be like us studying the Canadians and the Mexicans and the South Americans and anybody that surrounds our country and find out that we all came from a common ancestor.

Well, why is one group the people of God and the rest of these groups are not? They're descended from Abraham. This should have told Israel something. This is something Jesus tried to tell them when he was here.

You rest everything on the fact that you're a son of Abraham. Haven't you read history?

There are tons of sons of Abraham. Lots of people start out with that heritage.

You began well, but something stops you short. There is something that distinguishes us beyond that heritage. There's something that distinguishes us beyond birth.

This is what separates those on the narrow road from those on the broad road in Christianity today. It takes more than your birth. It takes more than being able to claim your father in common.

God will bless those who honor him. God will bless those who hear his voice and obey it. We've got to be sure we're hearing his voice and not somebody that says they're speaking on his behalf.

You can see people on TV all the time that say they're speaking in God's behalf. God told me. God revealed this.

God laid it on my heart. We've got manifest charlatans and weirdos and wackos and gooseballs all speaking in God's name. That's not the voice of God.

There are many more subtle things. There are many things that have the flavor and the appearance of genuineness and validity that are not the voice of God. If we want to be sons in deed, if we want to be sons of our father in heaven, if we want to be fellow heirs with Christ, we've got to hear the voice of God and we've got to heed it.

That means paying attention. If we have to get off by ourselves like Isaac did, then that's what we need to do. If we need to find the teaching of the word of God that we can latch onto, that we can expose ourselves to and fill up those reservoirs in our soul so that we have something to meditate on.

God is not going to speak in the voice of the speaker. God is going to speak out of the wellsprings of his word that is stored away in our heart. God the Holy Spirit will take those things that we have tucked away.

Like Mary in our Luke study, she pondered these things in her heart. She treasured them. She stored them up.

This is the place from where God is going to speak. Some people listen for a phrase or a word or something that the teacher is going to say. It's what we metabolize.

It's what we digest and make a part of our thinking. That's where God is going to speak. That's where his voice is heard.

That's where we need to focus our attention. It's so easy to be distracted and focus our attention on the world and on impacts and on results and on circumstances and on issues and on problems and the resolution of problems rather than listening for the voice of God in our hearts speaking through his word by means of his spirit to lead us into all

truth, to enable us in the area of capacity for love, capacity for life, capacity for happiness, capacity to discern the right way and to follow it in the daily decisions of life, the daily priorities of life. And when the big test comes, when the voice of God calls through a messenger and says, Go, like Rebecca heard it, like Abraham heard it, there is a foundation of faith.

There's a pattern of worship and of relationship with God that enables us to step out and say, I'm ready. Let's go. Let's not delay two days or ten.

This is the great heritage that the nation of Israel has in their forebears, in Abraham and in Rebecca and later in Jacob and the others that we're going to see in the book of Genesis. And all of these things were written for our instruction. We upon whom the ends of the ages have come to remember who we are and why we're here, to hear the voice of God and keep it in the daily things of life, whether the decision is large or the decision is small, to do whatever we do heartily and unto the Lord and not unto men, to be content with the things that we have and to focus on the eternal values.

This is what we are called to. It's so hard to see in the distracting, media-saturated world of Christianity today that this is the clear voice of God as he speaks to us from the pages of his Word. Let's close in prayer.

We thank you, Father, for the privilege of studying your Word. We thank you for the examples that we have seen. We've seen the 12 sons of Nahor.

We've seen the 12 sons of Ishmael. We've seen the 13 sons and grandsons that Abraham has with Keturah and all of them, although the potential was there through relationship with Abraham and through knowledge of you, through your Word, did not find themselves in the line of blessing and in the line of promise. We thank you that we stand squarely under the auspices of your grace through your Son, Jesus Christ, and we pray that we will seize and lay hold of everything you have for us through him.

We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.