

The image shows a church building with palm trees in the background. Overlaid on the image is the text "Starlight Adult SS Lesson Genesis 23-24" in a stylized, bold font with a red outline and white fill. The text is arranged in three lines: "Starlight" on the top line, "Adult SS Lesson" on the middle line, and "Genesis 23-24" on the bottom line.

Starlight Adult SS Lesson Genesis 23-24

These two chapters stand in contrast to one another, for in one we have a funeral & in the other a wedding. The land of Canaan is "a land of hills & valleys" (Deut. 11:11); the Christian life has both its sorrows & joys. Yet in both, Abraham walked by faith (Heb. 11:13-17). Chapter 23 shows Abraham as a mourner, one who sorrows yet not "as others which have no hope" (1 Thes. 4:13ff). What a testimony he was before his lost neighbors! How different Sarah's burial was from the heathen burials of that day. How strange that the first plot of ground Abraham possessed in Canaan was a tomb! Genesis 49:31-33 indicates that six people were eventually buried there. Abraham carefully handled his business matters, making sure that everything was done "decently & in order." It is shameful when believers carry out questionable business deals, especially with those who are lost. We will concentrate on chapter 24, which is rich in spiritual lessons. We see in Abraham, his servant, & Rebekah three wonderful examples.

I. Abraham's Example of Dedication (24:1-9)

At this point, Abraham is 140 years old (25:20 & 21:5). God has blessed him spiritually & materially, but he wants to be sure that the right bride is chosen for Isaac. Of course, we see here a picture of the Heavenly Father choosing a bride (the church) for His Son (Christ). How did Abraham know that God would provide the right woman for his son? He trusted the promises of God! Isaac was God's possession. Abraham had laid him on the altar years before, & he knew that God would supply the need. Otherwise, the promised seed could never be born.

The woman must come from within the family of God; she must not be one of the heathen women. No doubt there were many beautiful & talented Canaanite women who would have gladly married Isaac & shared his wealth, but this was against God's will. In vv. 6 & 8, Abraham emphasizes this fact; & we need to emphasize it today. "Only in the Lord" is the admonition of 1 Cor. 7:39-40 (2 Cor. 6:14-18). It is tragic when parents push their children to marry "into society" & out of the blessing of the Lord! Abraham would rather his son remain single than go back to Ur for a wife, or take a wife from the Canaanite nations.

II. The Servant's Example of Devotion (24:10-49)

In a spiritual sense, the servant is a picture of the Holy Spirit whose work is to bring the lost to Christ & thus make up His bride. The servant's name is not given, for the ministry of the Spirit is to point to Christ & glorify Him. The servant repeatedly mentioned his master & his master's son. He lived to please his master; the word "master" is found 22 times in this chapter. The Spirit has been sent to represent Christ & do

the Savior's will here on earth. The servant carried with him a portion of his master's wealth (vv. 10, 22, 30, 53), just as the Holy Spirit today is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance (Eph. 1:14), sharing with us but a small portion of the great wealth we shall one day enjoy in glory.

In addition, the servant is an example for us as we seek to serve the Lord. As already mentioned, the servant thought only of his master's will. In fact, he was so anxious to finish his task that he cared nothing for food (v. 33; John 4:31-34). Too often we put physical things ahead of the spiritual. The servant received his orders from his master & did not change them one bit. He believed in prayer (Isa. 65:24) & knew how to wait on the Lord. There is no place for rash impatience in the service of Christ.

The servant knew how to trust in the leading of the Lord: "I being in the way (of willing obedience), the Lord led me" (v. 27). See the claim of Jn 7:17. Once he knew what God's will was, he did not delay, but hastened to perform his task (v. 17). The hospitality of the home was delightful, but he had a job to do for his master & everything else could wait. The servant reported to his master when he returned home (v. 66), just as we must give an account when we see Christ. The servant probably taught the bride about the bridegroom as they journeyed. "He shall glorify Me," said Christ concerning the Holy Spirit (Jn 16:14).

III. Rebekah's Example of Decision (24:50-67)

Again, we see a picture of Christ & His church. Rebekah was a pure virgin, just as the church will be when the marriage in heaven takes place (Rev. 19:7-8). Rebekah identified with the flock, just as the church is both the bride of Christ & the flock (Jn 10:7-18).

Rebekah had to make an important decision: would she stay home with her family & continue to be a servant, or would she by faith believe the words of the servant & go to be with Isaac, a man she had never seen? Certainly there were obstacles in the way: her brother wanted her to stay awhile (v. 55); the trip would be long & difficult; Isaac was a pilgrim without a settled home; & she would have to leave her loved ones. The world often advises the sinner to wait, just as Laban advised his sister. Sinners generally are not in a hurry about the salvation of their souls. Up to this point, Rebekah had been hastening (vv. 18-20, 28), but now they wanted her to slow down. (Isa. 55:6).

We cannot help but admire her decision: "I will go." This act of faith (1 Pet 1:8) changed her life. She was changed from being a servant to being a bride, from the loneliness of the world to the joy of love & companionship. Did she see all of Isaac's wealth? No.

That would be impossible! Did she know all about him? No. But what she saw & heard convinced her that she must go. Similarly, with lost sinners today, the Spirit speaks & shows them the things of Christ, sufficient for them to make a right decision.

We left Isaac (as far as the record is concerned) on Mt. Moriah, for 22:19 mentions Abraham alone. Isaac is a picture of our Lord who went to Calvary to die for us, then returned to heaven to wait for His bride. In chapter 24, the servant (the Holy Spirit) went forth to seek the bride. Then, when the bride approached, Isaac appeared to receive her.

What a scene, it may take place today! Just as it was "eventide" when they met, so it will be dark in this world when Christ returns for His bride. Rebekah's faith was rewarded. Her name was recorded in God's Word; she shared Isaac's love & wealth, & she became an important part of God's plan. Had she refused to go, she would have died an unknown woman. (1 Jn 2:17,).*****

Vs 23:1-4 *In Bible days, death & burial were steeped in ritual & traditions. Failing to honor a dead person demonstrated the greatest possible lack of respect. An improper burial was the equivalent of a curse. Mourning was an essential part of the death ritual. Friends & relatives let out loud cries for all to hear. Because embalming was unheard of, these same friends & relatives helped prepare the body for burial, which usually took place on the same day because of the warm climate.*

Vs 23:4-6 *Abraham was in a foreign land looking for a place to bury his wife. Strangers offered to help him because he was "a mighty prince," & they respected him. Abraham's reputation was above reproach. Those who invest their time & money in serving God often earn a pleasant return on their investment — a good reputation & the respect of others.*

Vs 23:10-15 *The polite interchange between Abraham & Ephron was typical of bargaining at that time. Ephron graciously offered to give his land to Abraham at no charge; Abraham insisted on paying for it; Ephron politely mentioned the price but said, in effect, that it wasn't important; Abraham paid the 400 shekels of silver. Both men knew what was going on as they went thru the bargaining process. If Abraham had accepted the land as a gift when it was offered, he would have insulted Ephron, who then would have rescinded his offer.*

Vs 23:16 *400 shekels of silver was a high price for the property Abraham bought. The Hittites weren't thrilled about foreigners buying their property, so Abraham had little bargaining leverage. Ephron asked an outrageous price. The custom of the day was to ask double the fair market value of the land, fully expecting the buyer to offer half the stated price. Abraham did not bargain. He simply paid the initial price. He was not trying to take anything he didn't deserve. Even though God had promised the land to Abraham, he did not just take it away from Ephron.*

Vs 24:2,9 *In Abraham's culture, putting a hand under the thigh was how an agreement was sealed or a covenant ratified. To accomplish the same purpose, we shake hands, swear oaths, or sign documents in the presence of a notary public.*

Vs 24:4 *Abraham wanted Isaac to marry within the family. This was a common practice at this time that had the added advantage of avoiding intermarriage with pagan neighbors. A son's wife was usually chosen by the parents. It was common for a woman to be married in her early teens although Rebekah was probably older.*

Vs 24:6 *Abraham wanted Isaac to stay in Canaan, but he didn't want him to marry a local girl. This contrasts to the way Hagar selected a wife for Ishmael (Gen 21). To have Isaac stay & marry, or send him back to marry a relative would have been easier. But Abraham wanted to obey God in the who & in the where. Make your obedience full & complete.*

Vs 24:11 *The well, the chief source of water for an entire village, was usually located outside town along the main road. Many people had to walk a mile or more for their water. They could use only what they could carry home. Farmers & shepherds would come from nearby fields to draw water for their animals. The well was a good place to meet new friends or to chat with old ones. Rebekah would have come twice daily to draw water for her family.*

Vs 24:12 *Abraham's servant asked God for guidance in this very important task. Obviously Eliezer had learned much about faith & about God from his master. What are your family members, friends, & associates learning about God from watching you? Be like Abraham, setting an example of dependent faith. & be like Eliezer, asking God for guidance before any venture.*

Vs 24:14 *Was it right for Abraham's servant to ask God for such a specific sign? The sign he requested was only slightly out of the ordinary. The hospitality of the day required women at the well to offer water to weary travelers, but not to their animals. Eliezer was simply asking God to show him a woman with an attitude of service—someone who would go beyond the expected. An offer to water his camels would indicate that kind of attitude. Eliezer did not ask for a woman with looks or wealth. He knew the importance of having the right heart, & he asked God to help him with his task.*

Vs 24:15,16 *The servant was looking for a sign of inner beauty. Appearance is important to us, & we spend time & money improving it. But how much effort do we put into developing our inner beauty? Patience, kindness, & joy are the beauty treatments that help us become truly lovely — on the inside.*

Vs 24:18-21 *Rebekah's servant spirit was clearly demonstrated as she willingly & quickly drew water for Eliezer's camels. The pots used for carrying water were large & heavy. It took a lot of water to satisfy a thirsty camel—up to 25 gallons per camel after a week's travel. Seeing Rebekah go to work, Eliezer knew this was a woman with a heart for doing far more than the bare minimum. Do you have a servant spirit? When asked to help or when you see a need, go beyond the minimum.*

Vs 24:26,27 *As soon as Abraham's servant knew that God had answered his prayer, he prayed & thanked God for his goodness & guidance. God will also use & lead us if we are available like Eliezer. & our first response should be praise & thanksgiving that God would choose to work in & through us.*

Vs 24:42,48 *When Eliezer told his story to Laban, he spoke openly of God & his goodness. Often we do the opposite, afraid that we will be misunderstood or rejected or seen as too religious. Instead, we should share openly what God is doing for us.*

Vs 24:64,65 *When Rebekah learned that the man coming to greet them was Isaac, her husband-to-be, she followed two oriental customs. She dismounted from her camel to show respect, & she placed a veil over her face as a bride.*