

Isaac, the Son of Promise

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We've talked about a lot of the stories in the Bible, haven't we? And they're all true! Have you enjoyed them? I have! And we've talked about different people in the Bible, too. One of the people we talked about was Abraham, wasn't he? But today I thought we'd talk about Abraham's son, Isaac. We hear about Isaac in the book of Genesis in the Bible. Isaac, the son of promise.

You see, as I told you the other time when we talked about Abraham, the Lord had given many promises to Abraham. The Lord had said to Abraham, "I will bless you and make a great nation out of you. You will have so many descendants (great-great-great-grandchildren) that you won't be able to count them. And I will give this land, the land of Canaan, to them forever. -- And your descendant will be a blessing to the whole world." (Of course, that last part means about Jesus, doesn't it?)

But when God first said that to Abraham, Abraham and his wife Sarah had no children. And Abraham and Sarah got older, and older, and Sarah didn't have any children. Sarah knew that Abraham was supposed to have lots of descendants, and she told Abraham to marry another woman, too, to have two wives and to have children by that second wife. (Men did that sometimes then, had more than one wife, though that's not the way God had first made it with Adam and Eve, is it?) So Abraham did what Sarah said; he married a second wife, and Abraham's second wife had a son for him. And Abraham named his son Ishmael.

But then 13 years after Ishmael was born, the Lord told both Abraham and Sarah that Sarah would have a baby boy, and that this baby would be the son of Abraham who would inherit all of God's promises to Abraham. Well, they didn't believe this; they thought they were too old, so they just laughed! So the Lord told them that when they had their baby, they would name their baby boy Isaac, which means "Laughter" in their language.

And then God performed a miracle. He had old Sarah have a baby -- just as He had promised! Of course, if God says anything will happen, it always does happen, doesn't it?!

And oh, after their baby boy was born, Abraham and Sarah were so happy then! Sarah said, "God has made me to laugh! And all that hear me will laugh with me!" And they named him Isaac, Laughter, just as the Lord had told them to do. And they laughed because they were so happy.

And Abraham knew that the promises that the Lord had given to him, the Lord would also give Isaac. Yes, Abraham knew Isaac would have many descendants and that they would someday get the land of Canaan. So Isaac was really the son of promise, wasn't he? He had been born to Abraham and Sarah, just as the Lord had promised, and he would inherit Abraham's promises from the Lord as well.

Now, when Isaac was getting to be a big boy, his father Abraham gave a special party for him. His half-brother Ishmael was a young man by then, and Ishmael was making fun of little Isaac at his special party. So Sarah told Abraham to have Ishmael and his mother move away from them. And they did.

Well, Isaac grew up. We aren't told how old he was when this next thing happened, but he was a young man, and he wasn't married yet, so he didn't have any children yet. And then God decided to test Abraham and see if Abraham really loved God more than anything. So one day God said to Abraham, "Abraham."

And Abraham said, "Here I am."

Then God said to Abraham, "Abraham, take your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go where I'll tell you and offer him there as a burnt offering to Me."

Well, what do you think Abraham did?! Why, he loved God so much and had such faith in God that he knew God would keep His promises about Isaac, and that Isaac would have lots of descendants. The Bible tells us that Abraham knew that even if Isaac died then, that the Lord could make Isaac alive again. So Abraham got up early in the morning, and he took Isaac and two young men and a donkey and some wood and set out to go where God would show him. They all traveled for three days. Then they got to where they were to go, and Abraham said to the two young men, "You wait here with the donkey. My son and I are going to go over there and worship the Lord, and then we will come back to you again." Abraham trusted God, didn't he?

So Abraham put the wood on Isaac to carry, and he took a knife and something to start a fire, and the two of them started off together. But Abraham hadn't told Isaac what he was going to do.

So Isaac said, "Father."

Abraham said, "I'm here, my son."

Isaac said, "Look, we have fire and wood, but where is the lamb we are to offer?"

Abraham just said, "God will provide a lamb."

So they kept walking until they got to the place that God had told him about. Then Abraham built an altar there and put the wood on it. Then he tied up Isaac and put him on the wood. Then Abraham reached out and took the knife -- but the angel of the Lord called out to Abraham from heaven, "Abraham! Abraham!"

Abraham said, "Here I am."

The angel of the Lord said, "Don't touch the young man!"

The angel of the Lord said, "I know now that you fear God, since you would have given your only son to me."

Then Abraham looked, and what do you think he saw? Why behind him he saw a ram, a sheep, caught in the bushes by its horns. So Abraham went over and took the ram, and he offered the ram on the altar he'd built -- instead of his son Isaac. Whew!!

Then the angel of the Lord spoke to Abraham again from heaven and said, "The Lord promises that because you have done this about your son, I will greatly bless you and give you so many descendants you can't count them. It would be like trying to count all of the stars in the sky or the pieces on sand on the sea shore. And in your descendant all the nations of world will be blessed, because you have obeyed what I said."

Then Abraham and Isaac went back to where the two servants were waiting for them and they went home.

Then when Isaac was 37 years old, his mother Sarah died. And his father Abraham bought a piece of land with a cave in it, and Abraham buried Sarah in the cave, the cave of Machpelah. People in that country often used caves in which to bury dead people.

Well, a couple of years went by, and Isaac was now 40 years old, and he still wasn't married. But he was supposed to have lots of descendants, wasn't he? So he had to get married, didn't he! So one day his father Abraham called a trusted servant to him and said, "I don't want my son Isaac to marry any of the women here in the land of Canaan where we live." (The Canaanites didn't worship the Lord; they all worshipped false gods and idols.)

Abraham said, "I want you to go up to Syria where my brother's family lives, and get Isaac a wife there from among my relatives."

The servant said, "But what if the young woman won't come with me. Should I then take Isaac with me back to that country?"

Abraham said, "No, not at all! The Lord God had spoken to me and called me from that land to this land. The Lord will send His angel before you, and you will find a wife for my son Isaac there. But if she won't come back with you, you have done your job and you just come back home. But do not take my son back there!"

So the servant promised Abraham about this. And the servant took ten camels and loaded them with food for the journey and presents for Abraham's relatives, and he took some men to help him, and he left to go to where Abraham's brother had lived. Now these relatives lived a very long way away, and it probably took a month to get there! After all, they had to walk or

ride on camels. They didn't have cars!

Well, they finally got there, and outside of the city was a well. It was evening time, and this was the time of the day that the women would go out to get water from the well. And Abraham's servant began praying. He said, "O Lord God of my master Abraham, please be kind to my master. Help me to do quickly what I came for."

He kept praying to the Lord and said, "I'm here by this well, and the women are coming out to get water. Please let it happen that the young woman whom I ask to give me a drink of water and who will then say to me, 'Yes, drink, and I'll give your camels some water to drink, too.' Please let her be the one that is to be Isaac's wife. That way I'll know you're being kind to my master."

Now, how would this make the servant know that this would be the one for Isaac's wife? After all, wouldn't anyone offer to give the camels a drink of water? No, they wouldn't! You see, camels drink lots of water! I've read that a camel can easily drink 5-9 big gallons of water a day! And the servant had 10 camels with him! And the girl couldn't just get a hose and turn on a faucet and fill the watering trough for the camels. No. She would have a pitcher, and she would have to take her pitcher and go fill it with water at the well and then go empty the heavy pitcher of water into the watering trough, and then go back to the well and fill the pitcher again and empty it into the watering trough again, and she would have to do this again and again and again! Depending on the size of the pitcher, it probably would take her between 3-5 trips of going between the well and the watering trough in order to water each camel! For 10 camels, that would be between 30 and 50 trips back and forth to the well! I did some figuring, and I figured that to give 10 camels water from a well with a pitcher, going back and forth and back and forth between the well and the watering trough, that this would take about half an hour or so of work. That's a lot of work, isn't it?!

Anyway, just as Abraham's servant was finished praying, here came a beautiful girl with her pitcher. (It was Rebekah, Isaac's cousin, but the servant didn't know this!) She went to the well and filled her pitcher. The servant ran to meet her and said, "Please give me a little drink from your pitcher."

The girl said, "Yes, sir. Have a drink." And she hurried and took the pitcher down from her shoulder where she was carrying it and gave him a drink.

When he had finished drinking, she said, "I will draw water and give your camels a drink, too, until they've had enough."

And she hurried and emptied her pitcher into the watering trough and then began running back and forth, and back and forth, and back and forth between the well and the watering trough carrying water in her pitcher until she had drawn enough water for all ten of his camels! She was a real worker, wasn't she?!

Abraham's servant just quietly watched her, waiting to see if this was the young woman whom the Lord was going to have to be Isaac's wife. When the camels were all watered, the servant took out 2 golden bracelets and a nose ring for her. (They wore nose rings back then.) And he said, "Whose daughter are you? And, please, is there room in your father's house for us to stay?"

Rebekah told him who she was, and he realized that she was Isaac's cousin, the granddaughter of Abraham's brother! Then Rebekah said, "Yes, you can stay with us. And we have enough food for the camels, too."

And what do you think the servant did very first thing then? Why, he bowed his head and praised the Lord! He said, "Blessed be the Lord God of my master Abraham Who has been so good to my master. The Lord has led me to my master's relatives!"

Well, Rebekah just ran to her mother's house and told them what had happened! Now, Rebekah had a brother named Laban, and Laban saw the golden bracelets and nose ring that the servant had given his sister. And Laban ran out to where they were by the well and said, "Come in! Why are you standing here? I have the house ready and room for your camels."

So the servant and the men with him and the camels all went to the house. And they took the things off the camels and gave the camels food. And Laban gave the men water to wash their dusty feet (remember, they just wore sandals). And they put a meal in front of them.

But the servant said, "I'm not going to eat until I tell you why I have come." Then he said, "I am Abraham's servant and the Lord has made my master very rich with lots of different herds, and servants, and gold and silver."

And he went on to explain that he was there to get a wife for Isaac, because Abraham didn't want his son to marry a Canaanite woman. And he explained how he'd gotten to the well and prayed to God and how God had answered his prayer.

Then he said, "Now please tell me if you will be kind to my master." In other words, would they let Rebekah go back and marry Isaac.

And Laban and his father said, "The Lord is doing this, so we have nothing to say about it. Look, Rebekah is right here. Yes, you may have her for a wife for your master's son, just as the Lord has said."

When they had said that, the servant bowed down and worshipped the Lord Who had been so good.

Then the servant brought out all sorts of presents for Rebekah and for her family, silver jewelry and gold jewelry and nice clothes. And then after all of that, then he and the men with him ate a meal, and they spent the night there.

In the morning the servant got up all ready to go back home again. He said, "Let me go back to my master now."

But Rebekah's mother and brother said, "Oh, let the girl stay with us a few days at least. Then she can go."

But the servant said to them, "Don't make me wait, since the Lord has done what I came for. Let me go back right away to my master."

And they said to him, "We will call the girl and see what she says."

So they called Rebekah and said to her, "Will you go with this man?"

And Rebekah said, "Yes, I will go with him."

So they let Rebekah go with the servant; and her nurse, the woman who had taken care of her, went with her. And Rebekah's family blessed her and said, "May you have many descendants."

So Rebekah and her nurse and some maidservants got on the camels and went with Abraham's servant, and they started off on the long journey back to where Abraham lived. Remember, it would take them about a month to get there!

But what about Isaac? Well, one evening Isaac was walking out in a field and thinking. And he looked up and he saw the camels coming. And he started walking across the field to meet them. Rebekah was riding on a camel, and she looked up and saw him coming, and she asked the servant, "Who is that man that is walking in the field to meet us?"

The servant said, "It is my master Isaac."

Then Rebekah knew that this was the man she was coming to marry. And, remember, she had never seen Isaac before! So Rebekah got off her camel and put on a veil. That was the polite and modest thing to do.

So Isaac met them, and then the servant told Isaac all about his trip and how things had gone. Now, they lived in tents. And Isaac took Rebekah to what had been his mother Sarah's tent, which would have been an especially beautiful tent. And Isaac married Rebekah, and he loved her.

Now, isn't that a nice story?!

So now Isaac had a wife. But Rebekah didn't have any babies for a long time. In fact, Isaac and Rebekah were married for 20 years, and she still hadn't had a baby! So Isaac prayed to

the Lord and pleaded for a baby for her. And the Lord let Rebekah have a baby. In fact, the Lord let Rebekah have two babies, twins! And they named their twins Jacob and Esau.

So Isaac finally had children, and Isaac's father, Abraham, got to see his two grandsons! And Abraham lived until the twins were 15 years old. Then Abraham died, and Isaac and his half-brother Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah with Isaac's mother Sarah. (Remember, you can hear more about the life of Abraham in another story I made for you that was mainly about Abraham.)

Well, after a while there got to be a famine where Isaac and his family were living; food wasn't growing there. So Isaac took his family over into Gerar, a Philistine city, to live. And there the Lord spoke to Isaac.

The Lord said to Isaac, "Don't go down into Egypt." (There was usually a lot of food in Egypt.)

The Lord said, "You stay in this land, and I will be with you and will bless you. And I will give all these countries here to you and your descendants. I will give to you the promises that I promised to your father Abraham."

And the Lord said to Isaac, "I will give you so many descendants that you won't be able to count them, like all of the stars in the sky."

He said, "And in your descendant all the nations of the earth will be blessed." Of course, He was talking about Jesus then, wasn't He? Jesus is a blessing to the whole world by making a way for people to go to heaven and be with God, isn't He? And this was the same promise that the Lord had given to Isaac's father Abraham, wasn't it? And later the Lord would give this same promise to Isaac's son Jacob.

But back to our story. So Isaac lived there in Gerar. Now the Philistines didn't worship the Lord. They worshipped idols. And the men there asked him about his beautiful wife Rebekah, and he got scared. Isaac thought, "If I say she is my wife, they may kill me so they can marry her themselves." So he told them that Rebekah was his sister. He was lying wasn't he? Instead of lying, he should have trusted the Lord to take care of him as He had promised to do, shouldn't he?

Anyway, one day after they had been there in Gerar quite a while, Abimelech, the king of the Philistines, looked out of his window and saw Isaac with Rebekah, and some way he realized that she was Isaac's wife! So he called Isaac to him and said, "She is your wife, isn't she?! Why did you say she was your sister?!"

Isaac said, "Because I was afraid I might die because of her."

Abimelech said, "What is this you've done to us? Why, one of us might have married

her, and we would have been guilty!"

Then Abimelech told his people, "If any of you touch this man or his wife, you'll die!"

(This was like what his father Abraham had done before with his own wife Sarah, wasn't it? I told you about that another time. But imagine people so wicked that they might kill a man in order to marry his wife!)

Okay. Then Isaac settled down in the Philistine city of Gerar. He planted crops, and he got lots and lots of crops from them. Why? Because the Lord was blessing him. And Isaac got to be very rich and very important and strong. And he had lots of flocks and herds and servants. And the Philistines got to be jealous of Isaac.

And the king, Abimelech said to Isaac, "Leave here. You are much stronger than we are."

So Isaac left and went and lived in a valley of Gerar.

Now I didn't tell you about it when we talked about Abraham the other time, but years earlier Isaac's father Abraham had lived in Gerar, and Abraham had dug quite a few wells. Wells were very important, because people couldn't just turn on a faucet then to get water, could they? Well, after Abraham had died, the Philistines had dumped dirt and rocks into those wells that Abraham had dug. Now I had wondered why they would do that, ruin a good well; after all, as I just said, wells were very important. But then I read somewhere that if Abraham's wells were there in the land of the Philistines, then Isaac could have said that the land around the wells belonged to him, too. Anyway, the jealous Philistines had tried to ruin the wells. But Isaac had his servants dig out the wells again. And Isaac had his servants dig a new well, too. But then the herdmen of Gerar began arguing with Isaac's herdmen over that new well. So Isaac's servants went and dug another new well, but the herdmen of Gerar argued over that one, too. So Isaac left there and dug yet another new well. And this time the herdmen of Gerar didn't argue to get this one.

So Isaac said, "Now there is enough room for all of us." And then he went to another place.

That night the Lord appeared to Isaac and said, "I am the God of your father Abraham. Don't be afraid, for I am with you. And I will bless you and give you many descendants because of your father Abraham."

So Isaac built an altar to the Lord there.

And Isaac's servants began digging a well there, too.

Then Abimelech, the king of Gerar, and one of his friends and his general came to Isaac.

Isaac said to the king, "Why have you come to see me. You hate me and sent me away from you."

The king said to Isaac, "I see that the Lord is with you, so we want to make a covenant, an agreement, with you. We didn't hurt you when you were living with us, so I want you to promise not to hurt us. You are blessed by the Lord."

So Isaac made a feast, and they ate dinner together and made a covenant together, a promise, that there would be peace between them. Then king Abimelech and his friend and his general spent the night there, then they went back home. And that same day Isaac's servants came to him and said, "The well we were digging here has water in it now!"

So Isaac named the well "Promise" which was "Shebah" in their language. And the city there became known as "Beersheba" which means "the well of the promise." Because he and Abimelech had been near that well and there had promised each other not to hurt each other.

Okay, now. Isaac and Rebekah had their two sons, Esau the older twin, and Jacob the younger twin. But Isaac and Rebekah did something that parents should not do. They each had a favorite child. Isaac liked Esau better, and Rebekah liked Jacob better. And this led to trouble between them as they grew up.

You see, the Lord had told Rebekah before her babies were born that the younger twin (that was Jacob) would be the leader. But usually the older child becomes the leader, and he also gets special blessings. Well, when Jacob and Esau had been grown up quite a while and Isaac had gotten quite old, he knew that one of those days he would die. And Isaac wanted to give the special blessing to Esau, the older twin. But Rebekah had Jacob, the younger twin, trick Isaac, and Jacob got the special blessing instead of his brother Esau.

And this made Esau very angry, so angry that he planned on killing his twin brother Jacob! So Isaac told Jacob to go away for a while. He told Jacob to go up to where his uncle Laban (Rebekah's brother) lived and to get a wife from his relatives up there. They didn't want him to marry a Canaanite woman like his brother Esau had done. (In fact, Esau had married two Canannite women!)

So Jacob left and went way up to where his uncle Laban lived. And he was gone for 20 years! When he finally came back, Esau wasn't mad at him anymore, and Jacob had had 4 wives and 13 children! So Isaac got to know Jacob's children, his own grandchildren, didn't he?

Sometime in there Isaac's wife Rebekah died. We aren't told in the Bible just when. But she was buried in the cave of Machpelah with Abraham and Sarah.

Now, from figuring the ages, we know that Isaac lived for about 20 more years after Jacob got back home. Then Isaac died, and Jacob and Esau buried him in the cave of Machpelah.

So Abraham and Sarah, and Isaac and Rebekah were all buried in the cave of Machpelah. Many years later Jacob and his first wife Leah would also be buried there. (You can hear more about Jacob another time in a story that I made for you that is mainly about Jacob.)

And that is all we are told in the Bible about the life of Isaac, the son of promise.

But Lord God says in the Bible that He would be called the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob. And the Bible tells us that all of the promises that the Lord had given to Abraham, He also gave to Isaac and then later to Jacob. One of those promises had been that their descendant would be a blessing to the whole world, hadn't it?

Now, I said earlier that this descendant means Jesus, didn't I? But how does it mean Jesus; how is Jesus a blessing to the whole world? That's right! Jesus is the Son of God, but He is also a descendant, a great-great-great-grandson, of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. And God the Father and God the Son (Jesus) love us so much that Jesus came to earth as a human so that He could make a way for us to be with the Lord forever, didn't He?! And how did He do that? Yes, Jesus never did any sins Himself, but He died on the cross for our sins, didn't He? Then He was buried. But then what happened three days later? Yes, three days after He was buried, Jesus was resurrected, was alive again! And if we believe this and if we trust Jesus to save us, He will. He has promised that, and God always keeps His promises, doesn't He? Then someday we will be able to be with the Lord Jesus forever.

I hope you enjoyed hearing about Abraham's son of promise, Isaac.