

GOSPEL DOCTRINE LESSON10: Birthright Blessings; Marriage in the Covenant (Genesis 24-29)

LESSON GOAL: To strengthen our desires to live worthy of our birthright blessings and of eternal marriage.

ABRAHAMIC COVENANT: “Abraham first received the gospel by **baptism** (which is the covenant of salvation); then he had conferred upon him **the higher priesthood**, and he entered into **celestial marriage** (which is the covenant of exaltation) gaining assurance thereby that he would have eternal increase; finally he received a **promise** that all of these blessings would be offered to all of his mortal posterity. Included in the divine promises to Abraham that Christ would come through his lineage and that Abraham’s posterity would receive certain choice, promised lands as an eternal inheritance. **ALL OF THESE PROMISES LUMPED TOGETHER ARE CALLED THE ABRAHAMIC COVENANT.** The covenant was renewed with Isaac and with Jacob. *Those portions of it which pertain to personal exaltation and eternal increase are renewed with each member of the house of Israel who enters the order of celestial marriage; through that order the participating parties become inheritors of all the blessings of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob” (Mormon Doctrine, McConkie, 13).*

S. Michael Wilcox, on the Abrahamic Covenant: “One of the unique benefits we receive as members of the Church is the privilege of receiving a **patriarchal blessing**. These blessings are named “patriarchal” because they are administered by ordained patriarchs. But there is another reason this title is appropriate, and it has to do with **one of the most significant things given to us in our patriarchal blessings—lineage.**

“Regardless of our race, nationality, or ethnic background, **our patriarchal blessings declare that we are of the lineage of Abraham** and therefore heirs to all the blessings of the Abrahamic covenant. A patriarchal blessing is a great and remarkable assurance that **if we remain faithful, we may receive all the promises made to the great patriarchs of old.** It is also encouragement to fulfill the responsibilities that accompany those and associated promises. **It is imperative then that we understand the Abrahamic covenant, with its blessings and attendant responsibilities.**

Jesus taught, “Ye are of the covenant which the Father made with your fathers, saying unto Abraham: And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed” (3 Ne. 20:25).

In brief, then, through the Abrahamic covenant, the Lord has a message for all of us who have received the gospel and are therefore Abraham’s seed. The message could be said to be: **I promise you the blessings of the priesthood that lead to exaltation with eternal increase, but in exchange you must take my gospel to every family in every nation in all the world so that they, too, can receive the same blessings of the priesthood” (Ensign, January 1998).**

1. Abraham emphasizes the importance of eternal marriage in the covenant.

GENESIS 24 – ISAAC AND REBEKAH

Brigham Young: “There is not a young man in our community who would not be willing to travel from here to England to be married right, **if he understood things as they are**; there is not a young woman in our community, who loves the Gospel and wishes its blessings, that would be married in any other way; **they would live unmarried until they could be married as they should be**, if they lived until they were as old as Sarah before she had Isaac born to her. (*Discourses of Brigham Young, 195-196*).

The story of Isaac and Rebekah exemplify the marriage decisions that matter most.

Abraham called his trusted servant, Eliezer, and put him under oath to insure that Isaac married someone worthy to continue the covenant blessings the Lord had promised him and his posterity. The oath included these provisions:

Genesis 24:2: “Thou shalt not take a wife unto my son of the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell”
Genesis 24:4: “Thou shalt go unto my country”
Genesis 24:4: “Thou shalt go . . . to my kindred”
Genesis 24:6: “Beware thou that thou bring not my son thither again”

FIND A SPOUSE WORTHY OF THE COVENANT.....Genesis 24:1-9

When Eliezer arrived in Haran, he stopped at the city well and prayed.

Genesis 24:12-14: And he said, O LORD God of my master Abraham, I pray thee, send me good speed this day, and **shew kindness unto my master Abraham. Behold**, I stand here by the well of water; and the daughters of the men of the city come out to draw water: And let it come to pass, that the damsel to whom I shall say, Let down thy pitcher, I pray thee, that I may drink; and **she shall say, Drink, and I will give thy camels drink also:** let the same be she that thou hast appointed for thy servant Isaac; and thereby shall I know that thou hast shewed kindness unto my master

A thirsty camel can drink up to 25-30 gallons of water. There are ten camels to be watered, and she must do it with whatever jar or container she has with her. The water in this well is in a deep hole, probably reached by descending a spiral path or stairs.

Genesis 24:15-16, 18-19: And it came to pass, before he had done speaking, that, behold, Rebekah came out . . . with her pitcher upon her shoulder. And the damsel was very fair to look upon . . . and **she went down to the well, and filled her pitcher, and came up. And she said, Drink, my lord:** and she hastened, and let down her pitcher upon her hand, and gave him drink. And when she had done giving him drink, she said, **I will draw water for thy camels also, until they have done drinking.**

WE OUGHT TO SEEK A SPOUSE WHO IS WILLING TO SERVE.....Genesis 24:15-20
TO HAVE A SPOUSE WHO KNOWS HOW TO WORK.....Genesis 24:16, 45

In his prayer of gratitude, Eliezer teaches another important lesson about finding a spouse.

Genesis 24:27: And he said, Blessed [be] the LORD God of my master Abraham, who hath not left destitute my master of his mercy and his truth: **I being in the way**, the LORD led me to the house of my master's brethren.

AS YOU SEEK A WORTHY, ETERNAL COMPANION, STAY IN THE WAY—
the strait and narrow way where you most likely will find a person worthy of the covenant..... Genesis 24: 27

Would Rebekah be willing to travel over 400 miles, with a man she had just met, to marry a man she did not know because she believed the Lord wanted her to?

Genesis 24:58-60: And they called Rebekah, and said unto her, Wilt thou go with this man? **And she said, I will go.** And they sent away Rebekah their sister, and her nurse, and Abraham's servant, and his men. And they blessed Rebekah, and said unto her, Thou *art* our sister, be thou *the mother* of thousands of millions,

FIND SOMEONE DISPOSED TO OBEY THE LORD.....Genesis 24:58

Genesis 24:67: And Isaac (1) brought her into his mother Sarah's tent, and (2) took Rebekah, and she became his wife; (3) and **he loved her** . . .

Ted Gibbons: "The love came last. I know this is not a popular thing to say, but I believe it is true. What I feel for my wife is not what I felt for her 33 years ago. I thought I loved her then. I guess I did love her. But 60,000 dirty diapers and 27 cars and 13 homes and 24 vacuum cleaners have shown me what love really means. What I felt then and what I feel now are perhaps the same thing, **but they are not the same amount. If my love was water 33 years ago, it would have been a puddle. Today it is the Pacific Ocean.**"

President Spencer W. Kimball: "Paul told the Corinthians, 'Be ye not unequally yoked together ...' Perhaps Paul wanted them to see that **religious differences are fundamental differences. Religious differences imply wider areas of conflict.** Church loyalties and family loyalties clash. Children's lives are often frustrated. The nonmember may be equally brilliant, well trained and attractive, and he or she may have the most pleasing personality, but **without a common faith, trouble lies ahead for the marriage.** There are some exceptions but the rule is a harsh and unhappy one" (*The Miracle of Forgiveness*, 240).

Elder Bruce C. Hafen: "Covenant marriage requires a total leap of faith: [couples] must keep their covenants without knowing what risks that may require of them. . . . Every marriage is tested repeatedly by three kinds of wolves. The first wolf is **natural adversity**. . . . Second, the wolf of **their own imperfections** will test them. . . . The third wolf is the **excessive individualism** that has spawned today's contractual attitudes. . . . Surely marriage partners must respect one another's individual identity, and family members are neither slaves nor inanimate objects. . . . **May we restore the concept of marriage as a covenant**, even the new and everlasting covenant of marriage. And when the wolf comes, may we be as shepherds, not hirelings, willing to lay down our lives, a day at a time, for the sheep of our covenant" ("Covenant Marriage," *Ensign*, Nov. 1996, 26).