

The Lord Appeared to Isaac

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to seek the blessing of the Lord and not to envy others who gain worldly riches. In this topic, we will see what the Philistines did because they envied Isaac. We will also see that Isaac responded by trusting the Lord instead of trying to get even with the Philistines.

Genesis 26:15-18 says, “Now the Philistines had stopped up all the wells which his father’s servants had dug in the days of Abraham his father, and they had filled them with earth. And Abimelech said to Isaac, ‘Go away from us, for you are much mightier than we.’ Then Isaac departed from there and pitched his tent in the Valley of Gerar, and dwelt there. And Isaac dug again the wells of water which they had dug in the days of Abraham his father, for the Philistines had stopped them up after the death of Abraham. He called them by the names which his father had called them.” In these verses, we see that Isaac was asked by the Philistines to leave their area. We also see what the Philistines had done after Abraham had died.

In an area with a limited amount of water available, wells become a very important source of water. During the lifetime of Abraham, his servants had dug several wells in the area of the Philistines to provide water for his flocks and herds. The Philistines waited until after Abraham had died and then they filled up those wells with dirt so no water could be drawn from the wells. That was a way to try and get Isaac to move away from their area because water was essential for the survival of his flocks and herds. Many times, such an action would start a war between two groups of people. Here, we see that Isaac chose to act differently than those who would start a conflict. He chose to move to the Valley of Gerar. There, Isaac had his servants dig out the wells, dug by his father, that the Philistines had filled with dirt.

We see that Isaac called those wells by the same names that his father had called the wells. Abraham had earlier experienced conflict about the wells that his servants had dug. Genesis 21:30-31 says, “And he said, ‘You will take *these* seven ewe lambs from my hand, that they may be my witness that I have dug this well.’ Therefore he called that place Beersheba, because the two of them swore an oath there.” The name “Beersheba” means the *well of the seven-fold oath*. Then, Genesis 21:33 says, “Then *Abraham* planted a tamarisk tree in Beersheba, and there called on the name of the Lord, the Everlasting God.” Isaac wanted those wells to have the same names his father had given them because the names of the wells showed the eternal values that had guided Abraham during his life. Isaac wanted those same values to guide his life, so he gave the wells the same names.

In addition, we read that the servants of Isaac also dug new wells. Genesis 26:19-22 says, “Also Isaac’s servants dug in the valley, and found a well of running water there. But the herdsmen of Gerar quarreled with Isaac’s herdsmen, saying, ‘The water *is* ours.’ So he called the name of the well Esek, because they quarreled with him. Then they dug another well, and they quarreled over that *one* also. So he called its name Sitnah. And he moved from there and dug another well, and they did not quarrel over it. So he called its name Rehoboth, because he said, ‘For now the Lord has made room for us, and we shall be fruitful in the land.’” In these verses, we see that the servants of Isaac dug a total of three new wells. We go on to read what they did at the first new well.

However, the men from Gerar who were tending their flocks in that valley had some of the same envy that Isaac had faced earlier. They immediately claimed that the water from the first new well belonged to them and began to quarrel with the servants of Isaac. As a result, Isaac called the name

of that well, “Esek”, which means *contention*. Isaac gave the well this name because of the fact that the men of Gerar quarreled with him and claimed that the water belonged to them. The word translated “contention” can mean to *fight with words or to fight physically*. To fight with words is illustrated in Genesis 31:36, where we read, “Then Jacob was angry and rebuked Laban, and Jacob answered and said to Laban: ‘What *is* my trespass? What *is* my sin, that you have so hotly pursued me?’” In this verse, the word is translated “rebuked.” To fight physically is illustrated in Exodus 21:18, where we read, “‘If men contend with each other, and one strikes the other with a stone or with *his* fist, and he does not die but is confined to *his* bed.’” In this verse, the word is translated “contend” and means to *have a physical fight*. Isaac heard that his servants were having verbal conflicts, but he did not want them to become physical.

Instead of fighting, Isaac decided to have his servants dig another well. However, the same thing happened a second time. The men of Gerar also claimed the water from this second well and also quarreled over it. As a result, Isaac called the second well “Sitnah.” The name of this second well means *strife*. Isaac did not want his servants to have strife with the men of Abimelech. As a result, Isaac moved out of the valley of Gerar so his servants and flocks were removed from the valley where the men of Gerar claimed the water belonged to them, even though the servants of Isaac had dug the well.

We see that the Lord blessed the results of this move. This time, when the well was completed and there was water in the well, the men of Gerar did not claim that the water was their water. As a result, Isaac named the well “Rehoboth.” The name “Rehoboth” means *plenty of room, wide places, or room enough*. By his choices and actions, Isaac clearly illustrated a principle that Christ would teach. Matthew 5:43-45 says, “‘You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’” But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.’” Isaac could have hated the men of Gerar or even gone to war with them. Instead, Isaac chose to give up his right to the two wells his servants had dug. We will see that the choice of Isaac resulted in long-term blessing for him. Isaac realized that the Lord had made room for him. He also realized that the Lord would cause him to be fruitful in the land.

Genesis 26:23-25 says, “Then he went up from there to Beersheba. And the Lord appeared to him the same night and said, ‘I *am* the God of your father Abraham; do not fear, for I *am* with you. I will bless you and multiply your descendants for My servant Abraham’s sake.’ So he built an altar there and called on the name of the Lord, and he pitched his tent there; and there Isaac’s servants dug a well.” We saw the first blessing God gave to Isaac, because he looked to the Lord, was that God strengthened his faith. We go on to read about a second blessing and we will see the third blessing in our next topic. These verses tell us that Isaac went from Rehoboth to Beersheba. It was at Beersheba that he experienced the second blessing.

We see that the Lord brought a great blessing to Isaac at Beersheba because the Lord appeared to him the same night. This was actually an Old Testament appearance of Christ to Isaac. Certainly, we could not think of anything that would be a greater personal blessing. Then, we are given the message that Christ spoke to Isaac, in Genesis 26:24, “I am the God of your father Abraham; do not fear, for I am with you. I will bless you and multiply your descendants for My servant Abraham’s sake.” Think how you would feel if you woke up in the middle of the night and someone was standing there and spoke this statement that the Lord spoke to Isaac. In just this short message, Christ made some wonderful statements to Isaac. First, Christ said that He was the God of Abraham, the father of Isaac. Isaac had learned many things from Abraham

about the way that the Lord had blessed him. He had even been with Abraham when Christ had spoken to Abraham. However, this time, God was speaking only to him.

Second, Christ told Isaac not to be afraid. This is a message that is given many times to those who serve the Lord. The angel told the shepherds, at the time of the birth of Christ, in Luke 2:10, “Then the angel said to them, ‘Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people.’” The reason why those who follow Christ do not need to be afraid is given in Hebrews 13:5, where we read, “*Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, ‘I will never leave you nor forsake you.’*” Then, Hebrews 13:8 says, “Jesus Christ *is* the same yesterday, today, and forever.”

Third, Christ told Isaac that He would bless Isaac and multiply His descendants for the sake of Abraham because Abraham was His servant. We see that Isaac then built an altar and called on the name of the Lord. This is the first recorded altar that Isaac built. He may have helped his father build the altar when his father placed him on the altar, but this is the first recorded time that he built one on his own, even though this is the second time the Lord appeared to him. Isaac was growing in his understanding of what it meant to have fellowship with God. This is a key lesson that each of us need to experience in our lives as we grow in the Lord. As a result of the fact that Isaac met the Lord and built an altar to Him, the Lord led him to stay in this place for a period of time, as we see that he pitched his tent in that place. This led Isaac to have his servants dig another well there. We will see what happened to that well in our next topic. We want to equip our physical and spiritual children to help others develop fellowship with the Lord and not just knowledge about God. They will only learn how to equip others to develop fellowship with the Lord as they experience that fellowship in their own lives. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children, by your example, how you develop your own fellowship with the Lord.