

Genesis 26B (2011)

- Let's dive back into the short chapter that gives us all we have on the long life of Isaac
 - In the first part of the chapter we noted that Moses is highlighting three thoughts about Isaac the man
 - Each point is made by retelling a particular event in the life of Isaac
 - These events were selected because they illustrate the point Moses believes we need to know
 - The first point Moses taught us was that Isaac was a man who heard and obeyed God
 - He remained in the land according to God's instructions even though the famine was severe
 - Moses' second point fills out the man by showing he wasn't perfect
 - Moses told of the time when Isaac lied about his wife, just as Abraham had done twice before
 - Besides confirming that Isaac is his father's son, this account told us that Isaac was a sinner like the rest of us
 - He had faults, worries, fears, temptations
 - He lacked trust in God at times, relying on his own devices instead of relying on God
 - But then we watched as God came to his aid nonetheless
 - God is remaining faithful to His promises despite Isaac's sin
 - Just as He did with Abraham
 - The more things change, the more they stay the same
 - It's back to the future, as we said
 - So now we move to the third event in Isaac's brief story

[Gen. 26:12](#) Now Isaac sowed in that land and reaped in the same year a hundredfold. And the LORD blessed him,

[Gen. 26:13](#) and the man became rich, and continued to grow richer until he became very wealthy;

[Gen. 26:14](#) for he had possessions of flocks and herds and a great household, so that the Philistines envied him.

[Gen. 26:15](#) Now all the wells which his father's servants had dug in the days of Abraham his father, the Philistines stopped up by filling them with earth.

[Gen. 26:16](#) Then Abimelech said to Isaac, "Go away from us, for you are too powerful for us."

[Gen. 26:17](#) And Isaac departed from there and camped in the valley of Gerar, and settled there.

- As we begin reading today, remember these events are set in a time of drought...in a desert region no less
 - Isaac was told by God to remain in this land despite the drought, which Isaac has done
 - But the question remains, how will God provide for Isaac?
 - In a drought, the land will not have pasture land for the herds
 - So how will Isaac find food for himself, his family and his flocks?
 - In v.12 we're told that he plants crops
 - When we discussed Esau and Jacob we noted that Esau's choice to become a farmer and hunter was a sign he rejected shepherding
 - So does this mean Isaac is doing the same thing?
 - In the context of Chapter 26, it will quickly become apparent that the answer is no
 - Isaac's isn't planting crops as a new way of life...he's trying to stay alive
 - And when the fields aren't growing grass for the flocks, you have to take other steps
- But the last thing someone should undertake during a drought is to plant new crops
 - But that's exactly what Isaac does, under God's direction

- This is the Lord taking care of Isaac as He promised
- Notice it says Isaac planted and reaped in the same year
- This is a drought harvest, so these crops grew miraculously
- And this was no ordinary harvest
 - Isaac reaped one hundred fold
 - Again, a miraculous bounty proving to Isaac and everyone who witnessed this event that God was truly keeping His promise to Isaac
- In v.13 Moses uses a series of Hebrew words to emphasize the magnitude of Isaac's wealth resulting from this harvest
 - He became rich, then richer, and then wealthy
 - He has food, and his flocks multiplied as did his entire household
 - In Hebrew, the progression is of rich, richer, richest
 - Bottom line: Isaac couldn't be more wealthy and powerful
 - And this happened in a drought
 - Now we know for certain that Abraham didn't need to go to Egypt to escape the famine in his day
 - He could have remained in the land and the Lord would have cared for him just fine
- I wonder what Isaac expected when he planted that crop?
 - Did he expect the crop to survive at all?
 - Did he say to himself, "Hopefully we'll get enough to make it through the winter"
 - So then God brings a windfall so amazing that it stuns everyone in Gerar
 - Remember this next time you stand in Isaac's place, wondering how you'll make it through a time of need or desperation
 - As Paul said...God is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us

- Then in v.14 the people of Gerar became envious of Isaac because of this blessing
 - They knew something was up with Isaac
 - The only explanation for such a harvest in a time of drought was that Isaac had a powerful God on his side
 - In a drought, food was power, and Isaac has suddenly become very powerful in this land of Abimelech
 - So Abimelech responds the way every threatened sovereign would: he tries to put space between himself and the new power on the block
 - But since Isaac has all the power, Abimelech has to force Isaac out using subversive tactics
- Abimelech commands his men to fill up all the wells that Abraham dug in the land of Gerar
 - Remember that these wells are the keys to life in the desert
 - They are hard to dig, being so deep, and if they are gone, then life can't exist in the region, especially in a drought
 - Abraham dug them originally, and he entered into a covenant with Abimelech
 - But since Abraham has died, that covenant is no longer in effect
 - And the present-day Abimelech decides to play tough rather than sue for peace like the earlier Abimelech did
 - So by filling them up, Abimelech hopes to drive Isaac further away
 - Sure enough, Isaac decides to give way and put some distance between himself and the king
 - He travels from the city of Gerar to the valley of Gerar, which is southeast of the city in the direction of Beersheba
 - Beersheba is only fifteen miles away, and it's the closest thing Abraham's family has to a home in the land
 - So it makes sense for Isaac to head in that direction

- Here's our proof that Isaac hasn't forsaken his lifestyle of wandering in the land
 - Although he planted a wildly successive crop, he abandoned it easily
 - This wasn't his land
 - The land belonged to the Philistines
 - God promised the land to Isaac, but not this land, not now
 - So Isaac recognizes he's an interloper and moves on

[Gen. 26:18](#) Then Isaac dug again the wells of water which had been dug in the days of his father Abraham, for the Philistines had stopped them up after the death of Abraham; and he gave them the same names which his father had given them.

[Gen. 26:19](#) But when Isaac's servants dug in the valley and found there a well of flowing water,

[Gen. 26:20](#) the herdsmen of Gerar quarreled with the herdsmen of Isaac, saying, "The water is ours!" So he named the well Esek, because they contended with him.

[Gen. 26:21](#) Then they dug another well, and they quarreled over it too, so he named it Sitnah.

[Gen. 26:22](#) He moved away from there and dug another well, and they did not quarrel over it; so he named it Rehoboth, for he said, "At last the LORD has made room for us, and we will be fruitful in the land."

- As Isaac moves, he must find water, so he locates the wells his father dug in past years
 - These wells had been filled by the Philistines after Abraham died, because the covenant had expired at Abraham's death
 - But Isaac knew there would be water there so they dug them again
 - Sure enough, when Isaac's servants dug, they found flowing water again
 - And sure enough, the discovery of water in a drought brings more unwanted attention
 - The Philistines in this area hear that Isaac's men find water, and of course they want it for themselves

- Digging a well was an intensive undertaking of manpower
- Therefore, only the wealthiest people could manage to dig a well
- This explains why the Philistines weren't able to dig themselves, but now they want it
- Isaac's men name this well *Esek*, which means contention
 - The name memorializes the circumstances under which the well was dug
 - In the face of more resistance, Isaac decides that it's better to keep moving
 - Once again, Isaac knows he has no claim to the land
- After moving a little farther, Isaac digs again
 - And once again the locals demand that Isaac surrender the well, since this land wasn't his land
 - This time Isaac names the well *Sintah*, which means adversary or hostility
 - The word comes from the same Hebrew root for Satan
 - Isaac is suggesting that these confrontations are really the result of Satan trying to drive Isaac out of the promised land
 - In each case, Isaac is holding firm in the promises of God, yet he is suffering in this desert and has no hope as yet to receive what the Lord has promised him
 - He must continue to wander hoping to eventually find somewhere he can stay
 - Some of the details of this story might begin to sound familiar to you
 - To recognize the pattern, you need to remember that Isaac is a picture of Christ at many points and here it is again
 - There is a time when Jesus goes into the desert in preparation to receive the inheritance the Father has prepared for Him

- If Jesus is to receive that inheritance, He must remain obedient to the Father's commands
- So to prove His obedience, Jesus goes into the wilderness without food and water for over 40 days
 - In that time, He's tormented and tempted by Satan
 - At times Satan tries to drive Jesus to disobedience
 - But all though the trials, Jesus remains true to the Word of God
- Similarly, we have a picture of Jesus' persistence in faith in Isaac's responses to these quarrels
 - He doesn't fight back in his own power, though he had mighty power
 - He remains trusting in God's power and in God's faithfulness to His promises
- Finally, Isaac tries a third time and now the locals refrain from quarreling with him
 - Now Isaac can rest for a while, having a source of water that no one seems to care to challenge
 - This well is called *Rehoboth*, which means broad place or open room
 - Now Isaac has moved himself far enough from Abimelech to give them both room to live in peace
 - And with that Isaac concludes that the Lord has made room for Isaac in the land
 - This is the key point for Isaac: having room to dwell in this land that will one day be his but for now belongs to someone else
 - So Isaac rejoices at this prospect of living out his days in peace
 - This is the perfect picture of how all believers are to live in this life
 - Today, we find ourselves the recipients of covenant promises from the Lord

- Those promises guarantee that one day we will have a wonderful inheritance in the world
- That inheritance will come after the resurrection and Jesus' return
- And even though today we are living on the very same planet that will host Jesus' return and serve as our home with Him, we are not going to receive that inheritance this side of the resurrection
 - We are simply borrowing someone else's land and wealth at this point
 - We aren't supposed to get comfortable
 - We aren't supposed to object when God asks us to leave our wells behind and move on
 - They don't belong to us anyway
 - We've been promised better things
- So in faith, we'll be content for the Lord to give us room, space to live in this world in some measure of peace
 - Isaac's life was blessed immensely because God made that promise to Abraham and his descendants
 - But the true measure of Isaac's blessing wasn't seen in what he received in the land in this day
 - The true measure will be seen in eternity
 - And whether God determines we should have a lot or a little in this world, what does it matter?
 - It's passing...it's not ours to keep anyway

[Gen. 26:23](#) Then he went up from there to Beersheba.

[Gen. 26:24](#) 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 the sake of My servant Abraham."

[Gen. 26:25](#) So he built an altar there and called upon the name of the LORD, and pitched his tent there; and there Isaac's servants dug a well.

- Finally Isaac reaches Beersheba
 - Beersheba was the place Isaac left when the famine began
 - He had ventured to Gerar to find better pasture
 - This prompted the Lord to appear to Isaac and tell him not to leave the land
 - If Isaac remained in the land, the Lord would care for Isaac, and in faith Isaac obeyed
 - But nevertheless, Isaac remained in Gerar
 - But as quarrel after quarrel took place, they had the effect of pushing Isaac steadily back toward Beersheba
 - Could it be that the Lord was using these conflicts to move Isaac back to this area where Abraham had sojourned?
 - This seems to be the case, because as Isaac returns, the Lord appears to him for the second time and reaffirms His promises
 - These two visits form bookends to the story of Isaac
 - The first appearance halted Isaac's departure from Beersheba and the second appearance commemorates Isaac's return to Beersheba
- At the appearance of the Lord, Isaac's men dig one more well intending to stay here for the duration
 - The story seems to have ended, except that Abimelech returns unexpectedly

[Gen. 26:26](#) Then Abimelech came to him from Gerar with his adviser Ahuzzath and Phicol the commander of his army.

[Gen. 26:27](#) Isaac said to them, "Why have you come to me, since you hate me and have sent me away from you?"

[Gen. 26:28](#) They said, "We see plainly that the LORD has been with you; so we said, 'Let there now be an oath between us, even between you and us, and let us make a covenant with you,

[Gen. 26:29](#) that you will do us no harm, just as we have not touched you and have done to you nothing but good and have sent you away in peace. You are now the blessed of the LORD.'"

[Gen. 26:30](#) Then he made them a feast, and they ate and drank.

[Gen. 26:31](#) In the morning they arose early and exchanged oaths; then Isaac sent them away and they departed from him in peace.

[Gen. 26:32](#) Now it came about on the same day, that Isaac's servants came in and told him about the well which they had dug, and said to him, "We have found water."

[Gen. 26:33](#) So he called it Shibah; therefore the name of the city is Beersheba to this day.

- Once again, back to the future
 - In an earlier day, Abraham was approached by Abimelech suing for peace
 - And now again, this Abimelech has come to ask for a covenant with Isaac
 - The reasons are largely the same
 - Like Abraham, Isaac is sojourning in this king's land
 - But Isaac has grown so powerful he actually poses a threat to the king's authority
 - If Isaac had wanted to use his power, he could have potentially dethroned the king and taken control of the land
 - This was Abimelech's fear, but this was not Isaac's intent
 - No more than Jesus in His day would have tried to take the throne of Israel by force by conquering Rome would Isaac expect to conquer this land
 - Isaac was content to wait for the Lord to give it to him in a future day
 - But since Abimelech doesn't know Isaac's intentions, he asks for a covenant
 - This was a risky step for Abimelech, which is why he brought his army commander with him
 - He is hoping to intimidate Isaac to enter into this agreement
 - Isaac is only too happy to do so, since he has no intentions to attack the king anyway
 - So the two enter into a life-long agreement to live in harmony

- Wells won't be filled in any longer
- Isaac won't have to keep moving away from Gerar
- In fact, on the day of the covenant, Isaac's men discovered water in that well they were digging in Beersheba
- What a good day for Isaac
 - He has found a peaceful existence in the land and the assurance it will continue throughout his earthly life
 - And he has found the water he needs to remain in this place
 - They named it the Hebrew word for oath, to remember the day that Abimelech made his covenant
 - God has kept His promises to Isaac
 - Isaac has received a blessing in the land even as he waits for ownership in a future day
 - As far as we know, Isaac never leaves the Negev again
 - The last place we see him is in Hebron, which is only about 20 miles north of Beersheba
- So the third and final thing we learn about Isaac is he was a man who waited on the Lord, satisfied with the Lord's promises
 - Can you be an "Isaac" in your walk with Christ?
 - Can you rest in whatever space God gives you here while you wait for an inheritance in the world to come?