

THE LIFE OF ABRAHAM
"A Bride for a Beloved Son"
Genesis 24
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INTRODUCTION: We have come this morning to Genesis 24 and our final message in the series on the Life of Abraham. This is the longest chapter in Genesis. It's a delightful love story---the story of Isaac's courtship of Rebecca---Isaac was 40 years old at the time, but he actually didn't have much of a part in the courtship. The custom in those days was that the parents made the decision. Here we see Abraham sending his most trusted servant to find a bride for his son--and her willingness to leave her family and travel across the desert to share her life with a man she had never seen.

Isaac is a type or symbol of Christ in the Old Testament. And so there are many fascinating parallels between the story of Isaac's search for a bride, through his father's entrusted servant, and God sending the Holy Spirit to call out of this world a people for Himself--a bride for the Lord Jesus Christ.

In addition to this symbolism there is the fact that this bride had to be chosen with particular care--because she would become the mother of the multitude of nations God promised would come through Abraham's seed; and through this seed would come the promised Savior in whom all the nations of the earth would be blessed.

No other marriage has been more important in God's plan than the marriage of Isaac and Rebecca, but all marriages are of special concern to God. For this reason, Christian young people can learn a lot from the principles found in this chapter about choosing a life-partner.

There are three main characters in this chapter:

1. Abraham--the father
2. Abraham's servant--who is unnamed
3. Rebecca--the bride

Let's try to summarize this love story this morning:

In the first nine verses, the Father, Abraham, is the central character, as he sends his servant to seek a bride for his son.

ABRAHAM SENDS HIS SERVANT TO SEEK A BRIDE FOR HIS SON ISAAC (1-9)

Verse one says that Abraham is now "old and well advanced in years..." Isaac was now 40 years old. Sarah had recently died and was buried in the cave of the field at Machpelah. Abraham felt that something had to be done to secure a bride for Isaac.

As Abraham sent his servant to obtain a bride for Isaac, he had some conditions:

FIRST (v.3) "I want you to swear by the LORD, the God of heaven and the God of earth, that you will not get a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I am living." Why not? There were plenty of girls to pick from, and they lived all around Abraham. There would have been material advantages to marrying a local girl. He could probably have arranged a marriage with one of the daughters of some well-to-do Canaanite chieftain. That would have given Isaac more wealth and political influence. But Abraham said no. Why? Because the daughters of the Canaanites were unbelievers. They did not love and worship the true and living God. They were very religious. But they were pagans who worshipped false gods. So Abraham makes his servant swear that he will not take a wife from the daughters of the Canaanites. He must go back to Abraham's own people in Haran---about 500 miles away.

THEN, in verse 5: "The servant asked him, "What if the woman is unwilling to come back with me to this land? Shall I then take your son back to the country you came from?" Abraham responds: "Make sure that you do not take my son back there." Because the temptation would be too great for him to stay there. He needed a wife who would be willing to follow where God had called him.

APPLICATION: Abraham's deep concern as a parent that his son NOT marry an unbeliever--regardless of the advantages--is certainly an obvious example to every Christian parent today.

- You must have the same concern that Abraham did, that your son or daughter marry a believer.
- Your main concern when it comes to the person your son or daughter marries should be a spiritual concern.
- When your child is young this is something you should be teaching them. ¥ The Bible gives us very clear and definite instruction about the marriage of a believer. There is to be NO marriage of a believer with an unbeliever.

II Corinthians 6:14-17: "Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? What harmony is there between Christ and Belial? What does a believer have in common with an unbeliever? What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people." Therefore come out from them and be separate. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you. I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty."

Is Jesus your Lord. Is God your heavenly Father? Are you His child? Then you must not be yoked with an unbeliever. To do so would be to act in disobedience to your Father who knows what is best for you.

So, Abraham's concern was that Isaac marry a believing woman.

The second section of this chapter (vv. 10-53) features the servant who is unnamed, going to seek a bride for Isaac.

ABRAHAM'S SERVANT SEEKS AND FINDS A BRIDE FOR ISAAC (10-53)

I believe the reason he is unnamed is that this chapter is a marvelous picture of the heavenly Father sending the Holy Spirit to secure a bride for His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

It may be that the unnamed servant here is actually Eliezer who was mentioned back in Genesis 15:2---fifty years earlier. If this is Eliezer, he would be an old man by this time.

In verse 10, he starts his journey with ten camels loaded with all kinds of good things. The liberal critics of the Bible used to laugh at this. They said this verse was evidence that the Bible is full of errors---because camels, they said, were not yet domesticated in 2,000 B.B.--the time of Abraham. However, we now have definite archaeological evidence that camels were domesticated at least as far back as 2,400 B.C.--long before the time of Abraham.

The servant made his way to the town of Nahor, which was Haran. A journey of about six weeks by camel. Just one day on a modern expressway.

The most obvious thing for him to do when he arrived would be to start asking for Abraham's relatives. BUT HE DOESN'T DO THAT. He commits the situation completely to the Lord. READ verses 12-14.

This is a remarkable prayer. Brief. Earnest. Definite.

Where did he learn to pray like this and trust the Lord? I'm sure he learned by Abraham's example. It shows that this servant had come to believe in the God of Abraham.

ILLUSTRATION: This is the way the gospel should be spread, within families and among those who work closely with us. Charles Haddon Spurgeon said: "Though grace does not run in the blood, and regeneration is not of blood nor of birth, yet it does very frequently--I was about to say almost always--happen that God, by means of one of a household, draws the rest to himself. He calls an individual, and then he uses him to be a sort of spiritual decoy to bring the rest of the family into the gospel net."

APPLICATION: What a great thing it is when those who are the closest to us or those who work with us and watch us every day learn to trust the Lord as a result of our testimonies.

So Abraham's servant trusts the Lord to meet his need. He believed that the God of heaven and earth was concerned about even the ordinary events of life. He believed that God could put him in touch with the right person.

ILLUSTRATION: Some time ago, Diane and I went over to Ala Moana Park to spend a couple of hours at the beach. It was a very crowded day. Cars were everywhere looking for parking spaces. My thought was, "Oh well, I guess I'll drop Diane and David off and go park in the Ala Moana Center and walk back from there. But as we weaved our way around double parked cars ----- suddenly there was a spot right in front of us. So we pulled in. I said, "Diane, isn't this amazing! Look, we found a spot!" Diane said, "Of course we did Rick! Weren't you asking the Lord for our spot! I had to admit, I hadn't thought of it.

APPLICATION: Did you know the Bible teaches we can pray for even something as seemingly insignificant as a parking spot? Yes. Philippians 4:6-7 says, "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto

God. And the peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus."

ILLUSTRATION: A little lady came up to Dr. G. Campbell Morgan, after he had preached a sermon on praying about everything. She said, "Do you really think God is really concerned about the really small things in my life? He responded, "Madam, do you think anything in your life is very big to the Lord?"

So here is this servant praying that the Lord will give him success in identifying a specific person, and guiding him to that person.

As I have told you, F. B. Meyer's little book on the life of Abraham has been a blessing to me. In applying these verses Meyer writes, "Let US saturate OUR work with prayer. Like his master, the servant would not take a single step without prayer. . . . No one would have known that the old man prayed as he stood there by the well. Nor did he arbitrarily dictate to God; but he threw the whole responsibility of the matter upon Him who had ever shown Himself so true a Friend to his beloved master. He had a most difficult thing to do, in which strong chances were running against him. Was it likely that a young girl would care to leave her home to cross the vast expanse of sand in company with a complete stranger, and to become the wife of one whom she had never seen? We too are sometimes sent on very unlikely errands. Humanly speaking, our mission seems likely to prove a failure: but those who trust in God have not the word "failure" in their vocabulary. Their hearts are centers from which the fragrance of silent prayer is ever exhaling into the presence of God. They succeed where they seem menaced with certain disappointment. Christian worker! never start on any mission for God, whether to an individual soul or to a congregation, without the prayer, "give me success today."

Let's read verse 15: READ 15-21.

V. 21 says, "ALL his camels"!! One camel can drink 20 gallons of water, especially after a long day's journey. With ten camels, that would be 200 gallons. If her pitcher held a gallon, that would mean dipping it into the well and emptying it in the trough 200 times. It must have taken her a couple of hours or more.

What does this tell us about the character of Rebecca? She was kind. She offered a drink to this stranger. She was polite, but more than just polite, because she even offered to draw water for all his camels. She wasn't lazy or proud and haughty. She willingly worked hard at the humble task of drawing water for someone she didn't even know. Someone has said: "Is it not a fact that in such small, unstudied acts there is a sure index of character." This little act was a great test and tremendous demonstration of Rebecca's true character.

APPLICATION: You show your true character, not by how you act when you are all dressed up and ready to go out on a special date--but how you act in those unguarded moments at home at school in the ordinary events of life.

We read on in verse 22: READ 22. Then the crucial question: READ v. 23. "Whose daughter are you?"

READ v. 24-25. Second cousin to Isaac.

READ vv. 26-27. He saw God working out His purposes so beautifully. He marveled and worshipped---thanking God for answering prayer. Thanking God for moving in his life and the life of the family of which he was a part.

APPLICATION: We worship the very same God. Do you believe the Lord can work in your life and the lives of your family in the same way? Yes He can. He may not answer your prayer before you say amen, like he did for Abraham's servant. Sometimes he waits and tests us. But he does answer prayer. He works according to His time schedule which is always the right time! In this case it was immediate.

But remember, we can't expect God to guide us and answer our prayers if we are rebellious, scheming, disobedient people. God guides us as we walk in fellowship with Him.

Proverbs 3:5-6: "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not unto your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct your paths."

VERSE 28: Rebecca ran back all excited. Showing off all the jewelry. When Laban her brother saw all the gold and bracelets he decided he should go and welcome this man! He thought-- Anyone who can give away jewelry like that is a man I want to become acquainted with. Later, Rebecca's son Jacob would have contact with this Laban. He turned out to be a cheat and a liar and a hard taskmaster.

So he greets the servant: VERSE 31-33.

READ 34-41. Notice in verse 42 how he brings the Lord into his conversation. Every statement he makes, he is talking about the Lord, acknowledging the hand of the Lord in his life.

He reviews what happened when he came to the well and how he met Rebecca. READ verses 42-54.

TRANSITION: Beginning in verse 55 we have the response of the bride to be. . . .

REBECCA LEAVES HOME WITH THE SERVANT FOR A TRIP ACROSS THE DESERT, TO MEET ISAAC AND BECOME HIS BRIDE (54-67)

What will she think of this? "Will you go with this man?" She responds, "I will go." So they started on their way. The journey is passed over in silence, but I am sure the servant talked to her and answered her many questions about Isaac and his family.

In VERSE 63, as they approach their destination, Isaac is out in the field meditating, and I'm sure praying for the success of the servant's trip. "As he looked up he saw camel approaching."

VERSE 64: "Rebecca also looked up and saw Isaac. The NIV says here, "She got down off her camel." The KJV says, "She lighted off her camel." The Hebrew word is nafal, which means to fall. She got so excited she fell off her camel!!

A beautiful story. VERSE 67-68.

APPLICATION: We see in this chapter God's concern for us in the common ordinary decisions of life.

- choice of a life partner
- changing jobs
- finding a place to live
- making a career choice.

God is concerned about those things; and He wants to give us direction about these those things.--- as Genesis 24 so beautifully reveals.

TRANSITION: Now lets look briefly at the typology of this chapter.

A BRIDE FOR JESUS

From the time of the early church Fathers, the church has seen itself portrayed in this beautiful story of the search for Isaac's bride. The church is often called the "bride of Christ" in the NT. Ephesians 5:23-32 and II Corinthians 11:2.

In this story.

1. ABRAHAM IS LIKE GOD THE FATHER--seeking a bride for His Son, our Lord Jesus. Revelation 19:7-8 speaks of the marriage of the Lamb that will one day take place when Jesus comes back to claim us as His bride: "Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready. Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear."
2. ISAAC THE SON IS LIKE JESUS CHRIST, who like Isaac submitted himself to be sacrificed in obedience to his Father's will. He is now waiting in heaven for us. John 17:24: "Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world."
3. ABRAHAM'S SERVANT IS LIKE THE HOLY SPIRIT. He brings us to Christ. He convicts us of sin---reveals Christ's righteousness---and when we believe on Christ, He seals us for that coming day when Christ will come to claim us as His own. He assures us in our hearts that we are called by God and are the children of God. He protects us from harm on our journey to heaven.
4. REBECCA ILLUSTRATES THE BELIEVER, as she trusts herself to Abraham's servant and chooses to go with him. Rebecca is like the church in that her marriage was planned before she knew anything about it. Ephesians 1:4 says that God chose us to belong to Him before he even created the universe. He chose us to share in the glory of His Son. In order to be united to the Lord

Jesus, we must, like Rebecca, leave our old life behind to go to the Son, loving Him even before we see him face to face---one day we will be finally united forever to Him in heaven.

CONCLUSION: Have you responded to the call of the Holy Spirit who convicts us of our need of Christ. Have you said, "I will go"?

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