

Scripture Reading: Genesis 24

“Now Abraham was old, well advanced in age; & Jehovah had blessed Abraham in all things. 2 So Abraham said to the oldest servant of his house, who ruled over all that he had, "Please, put your hand under my thigh, 3 and I will make you swear by Jehovah, the God of heaven and the God of the earth, that you will not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell; 4 but you shall go to my country and to my family, and take a wife for my son Isaac." 5 And the servant said to him, "Perhaps the woman will not be willing to follow me to this land. Must I take your son back to the land from which you came?" 6 But Abraham said to him, "Beware that you do not take my son back there. 7 Jehovah God of heaven, who took me from my father's house and from the land of my family, and who spoke to me and swore to me, saying, 'To your descendants I give this land,' He will send His angel before you, & you shall take a wife for my son from there. 8 And if the woman is not willing to follow you, then you will be released from this oath; only do not take my son back there." 9 So the servant put his hand under the thigh of Abraham his master, and swore to him concerning this matter. 10 Then the servant took ten of his master's camels & departed, for all his master's goods were in his hand. And he arose and went to Mesopotamia, to the city of Nahor. "

A Bride for the Promised Son”

Well, it has been some time since we pondered the Book of Beginnings and even several weeks since I have been in this pulpit.

- **And now I fear it will also appear that my sermon is a bit out of order because most of the application is going to be here at the beginning!**

I had to decide, as I did with the sacrifice of Isaac, whether to do a rather long series of sermons on the this chapter or do it all at one time! I have decided that we will take the journey together through the entire chapter this morning in order to feel the full force of the story or narrative: In many ways I want the text to do the preaching if you will, so I want to focus our attention on context and the applications before we begin. This chapter is the story about the marriage of Isaac to Rebekah. It is one of just a few places where we have a great deal of detail about just how a man and a women come together in marriage, the institution given to mankind in the Garden of Eden.

- **With this account and the story of Ruth & Boaz, we see many details that we can more easily relate to today with courtship & marriage.**

With two others, when Jacob travels to this same land to avoid an angry brother and comes home with two wives and two concubines or when Ester is taken into the King’s harem we have situations that are much more foreign to our modern way of thinking.

If we are going to face the challenges being leveled against marriage in the public square today and if we are going to build strong marriages in our own lives or for the next generation then we must be familiar with what these passages teach us along with the other major portions of the Scriptures that address marriage:

From its institution in the Garden, down through these various examples, the wisdom we find in Proverbs, the teachings of Jesus, Paul’s admonitions and commands in Ephesians chapter five and finally seeing the New Jerusalem which is called the Bride of the Lamb near the end of Revelation!

- **BUT I also want us to remember that while we have a great deal of detail about a very important institution in marriage, the Bible does not present it as a fairy tale.**

Here at Church of the King we have always stressed the importance of the Church, of marriage and of families!

- **BUT we have always stressed that these are all institutions that must function in a fallen world.**

In each case our focus must be on Jesus or we will suffer great disappointment!

This is certainly the focus of Abraham as he lays down the ground rules for his servant and these are principles that come down to our own day:

- **We are to remain in God's will and we are to marry in the faith!**
- **This is especially important for our young people to remember!**
- **You must meditate on these truths and make them your own because a causal intellectual understanding of right things will fail in practice once the emotions and hormones get involved!**

Once you decide that you are "in love" with someone [whatever that means!], it is far too easy to make exceptions or excuses for that person's seeming lack of faith.

Even when you have two people of faith in a relationship they must guard against the temptations of the flesh that can lead them to violate the sanctity of the Marriage bed before or after their marriage vows!

Now fortunately God is very forgiving to those of us who have committed such sins in the past, but those who are looking to the future must never consider sinning because they know God will forgive them anyway.

If you think this might be a good course of action, please speak with some who are still living with the results of past sins...

- **God's gracious forgiveness does not always remove all the consequences of our sins!**

Chapter 24 of the Book of Beginnings opens with Abraham stressing to his servant that he must find Isaac a faithful wife and NOT let him leave the Promised Land. I will not venture to try and explain the details of the vow, but suffice it to say that it would be equivalent to using a hand shake to close a deal in today's understanding. You could even look at it as a signed agreement in some way!

So with the agreement made the servant begins his journey:

10 Then the servant took ten of his master's camels & departed, for all his master's goods were in his hand. And he arose and went to Mesopotamia, to the city of Nahor.

- **We should note here the riches of Abraham & how God prospered him!**
- **Also a quick reminder about formulas for 'courtship': Just how many camels does a young man need before he is ready to be married! ☺**

11 "And he made his camels kneel down outside the city by a well of water at evening time, the time when women go out to draw water. 12 Then he said, "O Jehovah God of my master Abraham, please give me success this day, and show kindness to my master Abraham.

13 Behold, here I stand by the well of water, and the daughters of the men of the city are coming out to draw water.

14 Now let it be that the young woman to whom I say, 'Please let down your pitcher that I may drink,' and she says, 'Drink, and I will also give your camels a drink' --let her be the one You have appointed for Your servant Isaac. And by this I will know that You have shown kindness to my master."

- **We see here a faithful servant who is a man of God using what is commonly called a 'fleece' to help him determine what God's will is in this case. *[again be careful of formulas!]***

15 “And it happened, before he had finished speaking, that behold, Rebekah, who was born to Bethuel, son of Milcah, the wife of Nahor, Abraham's brother, came out with her pitcher on her shoulder.”

- Should it surprise us when God quickly answers our prayers?

16 “Now the young woman was very beautiful to behold, a virgin; no man had known her. And she went down to the well, filled her pitcher, and came up. 17 And the servant ran to meet her and said, "Please let me drink a little water from your pitcher." 18 So she said, "Drink, my lord." Then she quickly let her pitcher down to her hand, & gave him a drink. 19 And when she had finished giving him a drink, she said, "I will draw water for your camels also, until they have finished drinking." 20 Then she quickly emptied her pitcher into the trough, ran back to the well to draw water, and drew for all his camels. 21 And the man, wondering at her, remained silent so as to know whether Jehovah had made his journey prosperous or not.”

- Was it right for him to doubt this clear answer to his prayer?

Don't we often do the same!

- But despite his wondering this man acts on what has happened!

22 “So it was, when the camels had finished drinking, that the man took a golden nose ring weighing half a shekel, and two bracelets for her wrists weighing ten shekels of gold, 23 and said, "Whose daughter are you? Tell me, please, is there room in your father's house for us to lodge?" 24 So she said to him, "I am the daughter of Bethuel, Milcah's son, whom she bore to Nahor." 25 Moreover she said to him, "We have both straw and feed enough, and room to lodge.”

26 Then the man bowed down his head and worshiped Jehovah.”

- Here we see a man giving thanks first to God as we always should even for meals and parking spaces no less the larger issues of life!

27 “And he said, "Blessed be Jehovah, God of my master Abraham, who has not forsaken His mercy and His truth toward my master. As for me, being on the way, Jehovah led me to the house of my master's brethren.”

- It is important to note here that even though Abraham and this servant charted the course he was to take and he himself put out the fleece of what to look for, he clearly credits God for leading him to where he needed to be!

28 “So the young woman ran and told her mother's household these things.

29 Now Rebekah had a brother whose name was Laban, and Laban ran out to the man by the well.”

- Yes, we will get to know Laban!

30 “So it came to pass, when he saw the nose ring, and the bracelets on his sister's wrists, and when he heard the words of his sister Rebekah, saying, "Thus the man spoke to me," that he went to the man. And there he stood by the camels at the well. 31 And he said, "Come in, O blessed of Jehovah! Why do you stand outside? For I have prepared the house, and a place for the camels." 32 Then the man came to the house. And he unloaded the camels, and provided straw and feed for the camels, and water to wash his feet and the feet of the men who were with him. 33 Food was set before him to eat, but he said, "I will not eat until I have told about my errand." And he said, "Speak on."...

- Once again we see the central place of hospitality with God's people which should be an example for us all, but in this case the feasting must wait until this servant has attended to his urgent task...

34 "So he said, 'I am Abraham's servant. 35 Jehovah has blessed my master greatly, and he has become great; and He has given him flocks and herds, silver and gold, male and female servants, and camels and donkeys. 36 And Sarah my master's wife bore a son to my master when she was old; & to him he has given all that he has."

- In explaining this history the servant is also making the case for why they should consider giving Rebekah to Isaac!

37 "Now my master made me swear, saying, 'You shall not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, in whose land I dwell; 38 but you shall go to my father's house and to my family, and take a wife for my son.' 39 And I said to my master, 'Perhaps the woman will not follow me.' 40 But he said to me, 'Jehovah, before whom I walk, will send His angel with you and prosper your way; and you shall take a wife for my son from my family and from my father's house. 41 You will be clear from this oath when you arrive among my family; for if they will not give her to you, then you will be released from my oath.' 42 "And this day I came to the well and said, 'O Jehovah God of my master Abraham, if You will now prosper the way in which I go, 43 behold, I stand by the well of water; and it shall come to pass that when the virgin comes out to draw water, and I say to her, 'Please give me a little water from your pitcher to drink,' 44 and she says to me, 'Drink, and I will draw for your camels also,'--let her be the woman whom Jehovah has appointed for my master's son.' 45 "But before I had finished speaking in my heart, there was Rebekah, coming out with her pitcher on her shoulder; and she went down to the well and drew water. And I said to her, 'Please let me drink.' 46 And she made haste and let her pitcher down from her shoulder, and said, 'Drink, and I will give your camels a drink also.' So I drank, and she gave the camels a drink also. 47 Then I asked her, and said, 'Whose daughter are you?' And she said, 'The daughter of Bethuel, Nahor's son, whom Milcah bore to him.' So I put the nose ring on her nose and the bracelets on her wrists. 48 And I bowed my head and worshiped Jehovah, and blessed Jehovah, God of my master Abraham, who had led me in the way of truth to take the daughter of my master's brother for his son."

- This faithful servant has made his case & now turns to them for a response:

49 "Now if you will deal kindly and truly with my master, tell me. And if not, tell me, that I may turn to the right hand or to the left." 50 Then Laban and Bethuel answered and said, "The thing comes from Jehovah; we cannot speak to you either bad or good. 51 Here is Rebekah before you; take her and go, and let her be your master's son's wife, as Jehovah has spoken."

- In responding they basically say, this is obviously from the Lord so who are we to judge whether giving Rebekah to Isaac is a good or bad thing!
- I think that is a pretty strong reminder to NOT over-think such matters when the Lord's leading is pretty clear.

52 "And it came to pass, when Abraham's servant heard their words, that he worshiped Jehovah, bowing himself to the earth."

- Here again we see the proper response from this servant:
Giving God thanks before taking any further action!

53 "Then the servant brought out jewelry of silver, jewelry of gold, and clothing, and gave them to Rebekah. He also gave precious things to her brother and to her mother. 54 And he and the men who were with him ate and drank and stayed all night."

- The servant confirms that Isaac will make a good husband and then they turn to celebration!
- I know most of you have heard me say that nothing good happens after ten at night, but obviously there are some exceptions! ☺

““Then they arose in the morning, and he said, "Send me away to my master." 55 But her brother and her mother said, "Let the young woman stay with us a few days, at least ten; after that she may go.””

- **The servant wants to go quickly which is understandable, but the family is giving away a daughter to a man in a distant country and would like some time to say good-bye!**
- **Also very understandable!**

56 “And he said to them, "Do not hinder me, since Jehovah has prospered my way; send me away so that I may go to my master." 57 So they said, "We will call the young woman and ask her personally.”

- **The servant sees the Lord’s hand in all of this and does not want any delays and the family seems to offer a compromise rather than just insisting on a long farewell: They will see what Rebekah thinks since she is the one taking leave of them...**

58 “Then they called Rebekah and said to her, "Will you go with this man?" And she said, "I will go.”

- **Rebekah sees the Lord’s hand in this matter as well and is ready and willing to go!**

59 “So they sent away Rebekah their sister and her nurse, and Abraham's servant and his men. 60 And they blessed Rebekah and said to her: "Our sister, may you become The mother of thousands of ten thousands; And may your descendants possess The gates of those who hate them.””

- **The Lord speaks prophetically through this family as they ask a blessing for Rebekah!**
- **She would indeed bear the next son of promise!**

61 “Then Rebekah and her maids arose, and they rode on the camels and followed the man. So the servant took Rebekah and departed.”

- **So this faithful servant has accomplished his task and is returning home and we then have a brief update on the waiting husband to be...**

62 “Now Isaac came from the way of Beer Lahai Roi, for he dwelt in the South. 63 And Isaac went out to meditate in the field in the evening;”

- **Isaac was not sitting around anxiously awaiting news from the servant, but rather had carried on his life which included time to meditate: Meditating on what it meant to be the son of promise and to wonder about his new bride!**

63 “And Isaac went out to meditate in the field in the evening; and he lifted his eyes and looked, and there, the camels were coming. 64 Then Rebekah lifted her eyes, and when she saw Isaac she dismounted from her camel; 65 for she had said to the servant, "Who is this man walking in the field to meet us?" The servant said, "It is my master." So she took a veil and covered herself. 66 And the servant told Isaac all the things that he had done. 67 Then Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent; and he took Rebekah and she became his wife, and he loved her. So Isaac was comforted after his mother's death.”

And so our very long account of the search for Isaac’s wife, as well as the previous account of the death and burial of Sarah are brought to a simple close in a single verse!

- **Isaac, takes Rebekah as his wife, he loves her and he is comforted!**

As I pointed out earlier, while this is a beautiful conclusion and reminds us of the blessing of Godly marriage, it is not a fairy tale as we shall see in the coming weeks with our study of the life of Isaac.

This ending reminds me of how Dr. Luke brought the Book of Acts to a close with the simple statement that the Apostle Paul, even as a prisoner of Rome preached the Kingdom, no one hindering him.

The advance of the Kingdom has had its ups and downs now for almost two thousand years, but we know it was begun on the foundation of the Apostles and is carried forth by the power of the Spirit! That gives us great hope and we should often look back to the wisdom and details in the Book of Acts to understand our role and responsibilities in that task today.

My prayer this morning is that we can see the conclusion of this chapter in the same way and as we strive to enter or live in marriage, or help others to do so.

- **May we may often go back to this account and the other lengthy accounts that I mentioned for the wisdom and strength that we need to build strong marriages in the midst of that growing Kingdom.**

After I ask the Lord's blessing over these teachings, we will sing in response the words of Psalm 45:

This is a Psalm that we often sing in conjunction with readings for the Book of Revelation where we see a description of the New Jerusalem, the Bride of the Lamb.

- **Today I trust we have seen again just how important marriage is in the Kingdom of God, even in the midst of our fallen world, and Palm 45 certainly confirms that truth!**

Communion Meditation: Revelation 19

"4 And the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God who sat on the throne, saying, "Amen! Alleluia!" 5 Then a voice came from the throne, saying, "Praise our God, all you His servants and those who fear Him, both small and great!" 6 And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude, as the sound of many waters and as the sound of mighty thunderings, saying, "Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns! 7 Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready." 8 And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. 9 Then he said to me, "Write: 'Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!'"