

Genesis 24B (2011)

- As a father, Abraham is taking seriously his responsibility to find a wife for his son, Isaac
 - A lot is riding on this union, since Isaac will be the one to continue the seed line of God's promise
 - From Isaac's family eventually the Messiah will come into the world
 - And Isaac's wife must be as acceptable to God as Isaac Himself
 - And equally important, Abraham's own testimony demands that he seek a daughter-in-law in keeping with his faith in God's word
 - So Abraham enlists his servant to find the perfect wife for his son
 - Abraham refuses to leave the land God has given him, as a sign of his faith in God's word
 - And he also refuses to let his son leave either
 - So the marriage will be an arranged marriage
 - Like the young boy who said to his father: Dad I hear in some countries, the man doesn't know his wife until after he marries her
 - And the dad answered, "Son that happens in every country."
- The servant entered the town of Abraham's family and waited by the well with no idea of how to find the right woman according to God's desire
 - So he does the only thing he can do...he appeals to God for direction
 - The servant sets up a test that he hopes will give him clarity concerning God's will

Gen. 24:12 He said, "O LORD, the God of my master Abraham, please grant me success today, and show lovingkindness to my master Abraham.

Gen. 24:13 "Behold, I am standing by the spring, and the daughters of the men of the city are coming out to draw water;

[Gen. 24:14](#) now may it be that the girl to whom I say, 'Please let down your jar so that I may drink,' and who answers, 'Drink, and I will water your camels also' – may she be the one whom You have appointed for Your servant Isaac; and by this I will know that You have shown lovingkindness to my master."

[Gen. 24:15](#) Before he had finished speaking, behold, Rebekah who was born to Bethuel the son of Milcah, the wife of Abraham's brother Nahor, came out with her jar on her shoulder.

[Gen. 24:16](#) The girl was very beautiful, a virgin, and no man had had relations with her; and she went down to the spring and filled her jar and came up.

[Gen. 24:17](#) Then the servant ran to meet her, and said, "Please let me drink a little water from your jar."

[Gen. 24:18](#) She said, "Drink, my lord"; and she quickly lowered her jar to her hand, and gave him a drink.

[Gen. 24:19](#) Now when she had finished giving him a drink, she said, "I will draw also for your camels until they have finished drinking."

[Gen. 24:20](#) So she quickly emptied her jar into the trough, and ran back to the well to draw, and she drew for all his camels.

- The servant's test is guaranteed to leave no possibility of a mistake
 - He asks God to send a woman who is willing not only to offer a strange man a drink of water, but she will also water 10 thirsty camels
 - This means spending considerable time drawing and carrying water to the tune of 250 or more gallons of water
 - The odds of finding such a woman were minuscule
 - And if you did find such a woman, you should marry her!
 - Then notice the grace of God at work
 - Even before he finished speaking, Rebecca was walking toward the servant
 - Isn't God's faithfulness and love for his children wonderful?
 - The servant was still in the midst of making his appeal to God
 - I wonder if he was focused on how to form his words, to ensure that God was listening
 - Maybe he was closing his eyes extra tight as he prayed
 - Perhaps he was suppressing doubts over whether God would honor his request – or even if God was listening at all

- And Rebekah was already walking toward the well even as the servant was speaking
- When did Rebekah start walking to that well I wonder?
 - She might have been on the road for the better part of an hour
 - And even before that, Rebekah was destined to be born on a certain day in a certain place so that she would be here on the day appointed
 - Moreover, she is the one Abraham desired, the granddaughter of his brother
 - So God had been at work bringing her to the servant before the servant even thought to propose his test
- Let this story be an encouragement to you in your prayer life
 - While we are working hard to find the right words to speak in making our requests before God, He is already at work
 - And as Jesus taught in the Gospels, the Father knows what we need even before we ask
 - So as we get up off our knees, have confidence that God is already at work answering
 - Whether we see that answer in the moment or perhaps in a future day, God is in control
- As the servant looked up he saw Rebekah approaching the well
 - She was beautiful, and Moses tells us that she had never been with a man
 - This made her the perfect candidate for Isaac
 - Of course, the servant knew nothing more than what his eyes could behold
 - But he didn't need to know anything about the woman
 - He had prayed to the Lord with a test that would remove any doubt in the process
 - So the servant ran to her to put his test into action
 - He asks her for a drink of water from her jar, as his test required

- Rebekah then proceeds to grant his request, followed by an offer to water all the camels
 - And the text describes how Rebekah moved with speed and haste, drawing water and rushing to fill the trough of the camels
- The servant had asked that the right woman be the one willing to do the work of watering 10 camels
 - But as God answered this prayer, He added speed to the picture
 - The text says she ran back and forth from the well and quickly emptied her jar
 - The Hebrew verbs communicate haste in every step
 - It's as if God went well beyond the requirement to make sure the servant understood the message
 - It reminds me of what Paul said in describing the God we serve

[Eph. 3:20](#) Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us,
[Eph. 3:21](#) to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen.

- So what do you suppose the servant expects to happen next?
 - I'm guessing he expected to see many young women walk away without saying a word or just politely refuse
 - Maybe a few would agree to give him water but no more
 - He probably expects to get his fill of water before hoping to find that one woman God has appointed
 - Whatever the servant was expecting, I can tell you what he wasn't expecting
 - He wasn't expecting the very first woman he selected to be the one who passed his test
 - Why do I know this? Well, look at his reaction

[Gen. 24:21](#) Meanwhile, the man was gazing at her in silence, to know whether the LORD had made his journey successful or not.

- The servant just stood there mesmerized by what he saw
 - The Hebrew word for gaze appears only here in the Bible
 - It means to stare in wonder
 - And the servant says nothing
 - And he watches, wondering if the Lord has indeed made his journey a success
- I think it's safe to say that this servant is surprised to see his search come to an end so quickly
 - And it's obvious God didn't want him to miss the sign
 - This is the God we serve...a God Who makes sure we know His will, One Who delights to answer prayers of an obedient heart
 - And we will often be caught off guard at how powerfully God will respond to confirm His will
- If we dig a little deeper, we'll also find a beautiful picture developing in this story, and it's time we began to uncover it
 - Remember back in Chapter 22 we saw how the Bible established Isaac as a picture of Christ, and with him Abraham became a picture of God the Father
 - The son of Abraham has become a picture of the Son of God in the story of Genesis
 - The writer of Hebrews confirmed this picture for us
 - And now in this story, the picture is being built further, and new signs are being incorporated
 - So to apply those pictures to this story, we've been watching the Father seeking a Bride for His Son
 - And working for the Father we have a servant, seeking the Bride on behalf of the Son
 - Now as the servant comes upon a prospective bride, notice how the relationship develops
 - The servant is bringing an offer to the woman
 - She could have responded positively to the opportunity

- Or she could have responded negatively
- The servant waits to learn by her response what the Lord had decided
 - If the Lord decided to make his journey a success
 - Or would this invitation fall on deaf ears
- When the servant sees her response, the servant knows the Lord has brought him success

[Gen. 24:22](#) When the camels had finished drinking, the man took a gold ring weighing a half-shekel and two bracelets for her wrists weighing ten shekels in gold,

[Gen. 24:23](#) and said, "Whose daughter are you? Please tell me, is there room for us to lodge in your father's house?"

[Gen. 24:24](#) She said to him, "I am the daughter of Bethuel, the son of Milcah, whom she bore to Nahor."

[Gen. 24:25](#) Again she said to him, "We have plenty of both straw and feed, and room to lodge in."

[Gen. 24:26](#) Then the man bowed low and worshiped the LORD.

[Gen. 24:27](#) He said, "Blessed be the LORD, the God of my master Abraham, who has not forsaken His lovingkindness and His truth toward my master; as for me, the LORD has guided me in the way to the house of my master's brothers."

- His first response may seem a bit unusual to us, but it was in keeping with custom
 - The servant produces a gold ring and two gold bracelets and gives these gifts to Rebekah
 - At this moment, he has betrothed her in marriage
 - These gifts are symbols of a marriage proposal
 - The servant makes the proposal on behalf of Isaac even before he knows whether Rebekah is related to Abraham
 - Effectively, the woman is married, though there is still the matter of the bride price
 - If the price wasn't acceptable to the family, then the proposal would be null and void

- But at this point, the woman is spoken for and it's only a matter of a little negotiation to bring about the final result
- Obviously, the servant is operating entirely on faith based on God's powerful answer to his test
 - This woman did everything he asked in his prayer, so the servant knows she is the right wife
 - He never even asks her name, because her identity is irrelevant
 - In fact, her identity is about to change anyway
 - She is about to become known as Isaac's wife
 - But there is still the matter of negotiating a marriage price with her family
 - So the servant asks for her name and family identification
 - And he inquires about whether there would be room for him to stay in their home during the negotiations
- Rebekah responds saying she is the granddaughter of Nahor, Abraham's brother and she welcomes the servant into her home
 - At the news, the servant is overwhelmed by God's grace and power
 - He immediately bows and worships the Lord
 - And he declares his amazement that God directed him to the exact person – the one person in all the world – that Abraham had wanted the servant to find
 - Do you know this feeling? I do!
 - Those moments when we see the handwriting of God in some circumstance in our lives
 - When we come to that instant recognition that while we were oblivious to God's work, nevertheless He was working all the while
 - I've seen so many of those moments in my life, but they never cease to amaze

- But when we have one of those ah-ha moments watching God at work, do we remember to stop in our tracks and bow and worship Him?
 - Isn't that the point whenever God reveals Himself to us? That we acknowledge His work in our life and thank Him for His grace and mercy?
 - If we don't do it in the moment, we're unlikely to do it enough
- So how does this moment fit into our picture of Christ and the Father?
 - Scripture tells us that when the Father in Heaven desires to find a Bride for His Son, He likewise went into the world
 - But notice that the Son is at home with His Father in the Heavenly Throne Room
 - And the Father has determined that His Son will not travel to the Bride's home to make the proposal in person
 - Instead, the Father relies on His Servant to search and find the Bride
 - The Bride of Christ is the Church of believers living in the world
 - The Father's Servant travels to the world bringing the offer of a marriage proposal to all who have ears to hear
 - We're given the opportunity to respond to the invitation
 - And the Servant is watching to see how we'll respond
 - When a favorable response comes, the Servant interprets our response as an indication that God the Father has appointed us to be the Bride
 - And the Servant then confirms our response by bestowing upon us gifts from the Father as a downpayment on our marriage
 - These gifts ensure we are set apart from any other relationships and reserved for our Groom
 - The gifts are also a small down payment on the great inheritance we will receive in the new family we're joining

- Scripture assures us of all these things

[2Cor. 1:21](#) Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and anointed us is God,
[2Cor. 1:22](#) who also sealed us and gave us the Spirit in our hearts as a pledge.

[Eph. 1:13](#) In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation – having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise,
[Eph. 1:14](#) who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory.

[Rom. 12:6](#) Since we have **gifts** that differ according to the grace given to us, each of us is to exercise them accordingly: if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith;

- All this happens without the Son's direct involvement or presence
 - His Bride is prepared in advance and readied for Him on a future day when they will meet
- Can you see the picture developing in all its detail and glory?
 - And can you tell who the servant pictures in this story?
 - Interestingly, Abraham's servant is never named in this story
 - That's unusual since the servant's role is so central to this long, detailed story
 - Furthermore, we know his name from an earlier chapter: Eliezer
 - So why didn't Moses use his name here, at least once?
 - We're left to conclude that the servant is remaining unnamed purposely
 - And the absence of a name serves to confirm the Person the servant represents in the story
 - The Servant represents the Spirit of God in His role to bring the message of the Gospel to the hearts of men
 - And as men respond, the Spirit bestows gifts to establish a covenant between His Master and the prospective Bride of Christ
 - Whenever the Spirit is pictured in the Bible, the character is never named

- We can find a similar pattern in another story that pictures Christ and the Spirit working together
 - When Boaz is introduced to his future wife in the story of Ruth, the introductions are made by a nameless servant of Boaz
- By keeping the Spirit nameless, His proper place is preserved
 - The Bible describes the Spirit as an Actor behind the scenes, invisible but active

John 3:8 “The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit.”

- As believers, we’ve never seen the face of Christ nor have we encountered the Spirit in a form we can see or touch
 - Nevertheless, we know we have been wedded to our future husband
 - And by grace we were found when we weren’t looking for a Savior
 - The Spirit asked us a question and we agreed before we even knew what we were getting into
 - Because our response came as a result of the Father’s gracious work to bring us into this relationship
 - And we’ve received gifts that we show to each other and to the world that identify us with our future groom
 - And we anxiously await the day we will meet Him face to face