

Genesis 24C (2011)

- Today we continue one of the most remarkable chapters in all of the Bible
 - The story of how Isaac obtains his wife is a beautiful story all its own
 - The challenge of finding a bride in a far away land
 - The wonder of how God lead the servant to exactly the right woman
 - Can you image in later years Rebekah telling this story to her children or her neighbors and friends
 - Wouldn't everyone marvel at the details
 - But what makes this account truly remarkable is the story beneath the story
 - The picture God creates out of the lives of Abraham, Isaac, Rebekah and the servant
 - Each person stands for another character in a much larger and more important story
 - Like our first story, this second story is true, told prophetically
 - We learned last week that Isaac is a picture of the Son, Christ
 - He is away from the world, living with His Father
 - Waiting for His Bride to be found in the world and made ready for Him
 - Abraham is a picture of the Father
 - He sends His Servant into the world to find the appointed one to be wedded to the Master's Son
 - And the Bride of the Son is Rebekah, who pictures the Gentile Church
 - Taken from the world and selected to wed the Son even before she has the chance to meet Him

- The Servant makes the proposal and betroths her when she wasn't looking for a husband
 - And finally, the Servant of the Father becomes a picture of the final member of the Godhead, the Spirit
 - He goes into the world searching the hearts to find those who are appointed to receive the proposal
 - When He finds that one, He brings gifts to bind the relationship
- As we pick up again in Chapter 24 at v.28, we're going to see even more connections between this story and the larger story of salvation

[Gen. 24:28](#) Then the girl ran and told her mother's household about these things.

[Gen. 24:29](#) Now Rebekah had a brother whose name was Laban; and Laban ran outside to the man at the spring.

[Gen. 24:30](#) When he saw the ring and the bracelets on his sister's wrists, and when he heard the words of Rebekah his sister, saying, "This is what the man said to me," he went to the man; and behold, he was standing by the camels at the spring.

[Gen. 24:31](#) And he said, "Come in, blessed of the LORD! Why do you stand outside since I have prepared the house, and a place for the camels?"

[Gen. 24:32](#) So the man entered the house. Then Laban unloaded the camels, and he gave straw and feed to the camels, and water to wash his feet and the feet of the men who were with him.

- Immediately after the servant made his proposal and placed the expensive jewelry on the young girl, she runs back home to tell mom
 - I think this is the standard response for any woman once she gets engaged
 - Pick up the phone and call a parent
 - Or in this case, run back to the house
 - When Rebekah enters her house, it isn't her parents who take the most interest in the situation...it's her brother, Laban
 - Most likely, Laban was the eldest son of Bethuel and took a paternal role among his siblings
 - As we see here, Laban immediately notices the bracelets and the ring in her nose (which was the custom of the time)

- We don't have to read between the lines to understand Laban's true interest in his sister's suitor
- Those trinkets on her wrists were quite valuable
- Imagine if your daughter or sister came home wearing Tiffany diamond-studded bracelets from some young man you've never met
 - You would be interested in meeting him, but it would be hard to ignore his obvious wealth
 - That was the point of Abraham's gift...to impress the bride's family
- In passing, let's note that wealth has its place in our world
 - All we have comes from the Lord, and to a certain extent we are all wealthy
 - Wealth is truly relative, and there's always someone less wealthy than us
 - So we can all find ways to impress someone with our wealth
 - Like Abraham, some believers are blessed financially beyond the average and with that wealth comes great responsibility
 - And like Abraham our wealth should be understood as a tool, an opportunity to influence the world for the sake of God's glory and the Gospel
 - But how we use our resources should be Spirit-led, as we see here in this story
 - Giving to Christian charities or the church is one option, but it's not the only way to give God glory
 - Here we see Abraham using his God-given wealth to impress a family so that his son will have the wife God intended
 - Is it reasonable to assume that God gave Abraham these resources so that he could obtain Rebekah for Isaac?

- And so that he could purchase that cave for Sarah's burial?
- After Rebekah returned home and Laban saw the gifts, he understood immediately what was afoot
 - His sister was engaged to a wealthy man
 - So Laban runs to find this man
 - They come upon him where Rebekah left him...standing at the well with the camels
 - And immediately Laban pours on the charm
 - He asks the servant, why are you standing here?
 - So the group moves to Laban's home
 - And Laban puts out the red carpet
 - We notice that the servant didn't travel alone
 - He has others with him
 - And all of them are treated with equal respect
 - This reception isn't altogether unusual for this day, but it's also clear that Laban is impressed by this visitor and his entourage
- The groups sits down for a celebratory meal, which was custom in the day, but the servant wants to stay focused on the business of his business
 - So he launches into an interesting retelling of the story

Gen. 24:33 But when food was set before him to eat, he said, "I will not eat until I have told my business." And he said, "Speak on."

Gen. 24:34 So he said, "I am Abraham's servant.

Gen. 24:35 "The LORD has greatly blessed my master, so that he has become rich; and He has given him flocks and herds, and silver and gold, and servants and maids, and camels and donkeys.

Gen. 24:36 "Now Sarah my master's wife bore a son to my master in her old age, and he has given him all that he has.

Gen. 24:37 "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 live;

Gen. 24:38 but you shall go to my father's house and to my relatives, and take a wife for my son.'

[Gen. 24:39](#) "I said to my master, 'Suppose the woman does not follow me.'

[Gen. 24:40](#) "He said to me, 'The LORD, before whom I have walked, will send His angel with you to make your journey successful, and you will take a wife for my son from my relatives and from my father's house;

[Gen. 24:41](#) then you will be free from my oath, when you come to my relatives; and if they do not give her to you, you will be free from my oath.'

[Gen. 24:42](#) "So I came today to the spring, and said, 'O LORD, the God of my master Abraham, if now You will make my journey on which I go successful;

[Gen. 24:43](#) behold, I am standing by the spring, and may it be that the maiden who comes out to draw, and to whom I say, "Please let me drink a little water from your jar";

[Gen. 24:44](#) and she will say to me, "You drink, and I will draw for your camels also"; let her be the woman whom the LORD has appointed for my master's son.'

[Gen. 24:45](#) "Before I had finished speaking in my heart, behold, Rebekah came out with her jar on her shoulder, and went down to the spring and drew, and I said to her, 'Please let me drink.'

[Gen. 24:46](#) "She quickly lowered her jar from her shoulder, and said, 'Drink, and I will water your camels also'; so I drank, and she watered the camels also.

[Gen. 24:47](#) "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'; and I put the ring on her nose, and the bracelets on her wrists.

[Gen. 24:48](#) "And I bowed low and worshiped the LORD, and blessed the LORD, the God of my master Abraham, who had guided me in the right way to take the daughter of my master's kinsman for his son.

[Gen. 24:49](#) "So now if you are going to deal kindly and truly with my master, tell me; and if not, let me know, that I may turn to the right hand or the left."

- The servant retells his meeting with Rebekah, and he covers every detail
 - In Scripture, a retelling of a story is intended to emphasize the accuracy of the details and to highlight God's work
 - This retelling shows that the servant wanted to demonstrate the work of God in his circumstances
 - He wanted to impress upon Laban that this wasn't an ordinary proposal
 - He was God-sent and Rebekah was God's answer to his prayer
 - Secondly, he wanted Laban to make his decision with a full knowledge of the situation
 - Notice in v.49 that the servant says, tell me what you intend to do so I can know what I should do

- Here we see a couple of connections between these events and the second story of the Holy Spirit and the Bride of Christ
 - First, notice in v.36 the servant says that the father, Abraham, has given everything to the son, Isaac
 - This is a picture of how the Father in Heaven has given all things to the Son

[John 13:3](#) Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come forth from God and was going back to God,

[Eph. 1:18](#) I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, [Eph. 1:19](#) and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might

[Eph. 1:20](#) which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places,

[Eph. 1:21](#) far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come.

[Eph. 1:22](#) And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church,

- Secondly, the servant's testimony offers another beautiful picture of our first response to the Gospel: we give our confession or testimony
 - We tell the world of how we met Christ, our confession is our statement of faith
 - In the story, the testimony is actually delivered by the servant, not Rebekah
 - But it works this way for us too
- When we testify to our encounter with Christ and give our confession, we aren't speaking alone or in our own power
 - We speak with the words and the power of the Spirit in us
 - Like Christ told the disciples concerning their own testimonies

[Matt. 10:19](#) "But when they hand you over, do not worry about how or what you are to say; for it will be given you in that hour what you are to say.

[Matt. 10:20](#) "For it is not you who speak, but it is the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you.

- So here the Bride has received the invitation and has received the Gospel
- And through the servant's testimony, the Bride's family – the world from where she comes – gets its first exposure to this new relationship
 - And the Servant, the Spirit of God, gives a testimony of how the relationship was established
 - In many ways, this is our first mission field: to those who know us best and can best appreciate the before-and-after change brought by the power of the Gospel
- After the Spirit has stepped into our lives and introduced us to our groom, Christ, everything is different
 - And inevitably, we will have opportunity to testify to the world about what God has done in our lives
 - As the entire encounter is retold, there is a beautiful picture of how we are called to testify of our experience in coming to faith
- In this retelling, we find a model for our confession or testimony, in three parts
 - First, tell the story boldly
 - The servant didn't let the festivities overshadow the eternal purposes of his trip
 - He interrupted the meal to insist on telling the story of God's work
 - Neither should we let the everyday events of our lives overshadow the importance of our testimony
 - Our testimony isn't merely a part of our life
 - It's the purpose of our life
 - Next, tell the story in detail
 - The servant made sure he retold every part of the encounter
 - Every detail of our personal salvation matters because every part testifies to the sovereignty and majesty of the God Who saves
 - Who are we to know what part of the story will resonate with our audience?

- Perhaps God will use a certain part to convict another person and convince of the truth of the Gospel
- Finally, give a testimony that glorifies the Lord
 - The servant made sure to emphasize the Lord's power and involvement in bringing about his encounter with Rebekah
 - Likewise, there are always two ways we can give our testimony
 - We can glorify ourselves
 - Or we can glorify the Lord
 - Be sure we don't turn our testimony into a story of us...it's a story of God and His Spirit
- Having given his testimony, the Spirit awaits the brother's response

[Gen. 24:50](#) Then Laban and Bethuel replied, "The matter comes from the LORD; so we cannot speak to you bad or good.

[Gen. 24:51](#) "Here is Rebekah before you, take her and go, and let her be the wife of your master's son, as the LORD has spoken."

[Gen. 24:52](#) When Abraham's servant heard their words, he bowed himself to the ground before the LORD.

[Gen. 24:53](#) The servant brought out articles of silver and articles of gold, and garments, and gave them to Rebekah; he also gave precious things to her brother and to her mother.

- Laban is struck by the servant's testimony, and he responds with a full acceptance of the offer...Rebekah will be married to Isaac
 - Notice that at this point both the father and the son agree to the union
 - In particular, notice that they acknowledge it is a work of God
 - The servant's testimony has produced the desired effect: glory for Good
 - The servant is moved again to giving the Lord thanks for His grace
 - And the servant produces a bounty of many precious gifts, both for the bride and for the bride's family
 - This was a formal payment for the bride
 - In this day, it was expected that the bride's family would receive a suitable payment for removing her from the family

- Sons were valued for their ability to continue the family name and to produce income for the family through their labor
- And conversely, a daughter's value was in the amount she could command from a prospective groom
- The better the catch, the higher the price
- Similarly, the higher the price offered, the more the groom was showing his love and admiration for the bride and her family
 - To offer too little was an insult to the bride and her family
 - To overpay was foolish
- The servant gave a valuable bounty to the family, in keeping with Abraham's wealth
 - And so the price was paid for Rebekah
- Here again the story produces a picture for us of our own salvation
 - When we were betrothed to our groom, Christ, someone had to pay the price for our new relationship with the Lord
 - And the price was paid by Christ Himself
 - And the delivery of that payment comes to our heart by way of Spirit baptism
 - The sin debt we carried before we knew Christ could only be paid by death, and by the Spirit, we have been joined to Christ in death

[Col. 3:3](#) For you have **died** and your life is hidden with Christ in God.

[2Tim. 2:11](#) It is a trustworthy statement:

For if we **died** with Him, we will also live with Him;

[1Pet. 3:18](#) For Christ also **died** for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit;

- Through the power of Spirit baptism, we are counted as having died with Christ and having been risen with Him in newest of life

- And all of this was made possible because a price was paid for our sins
 - We were bought by Christ's blood as Paul taught

[1Cor. 6:20](#) For you have been **bought** with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.

- The Bible gives us these intricate patterns and pictures so we can have an even better understanding of God's ways and His purposes
 - As we continue in this study next week and conclude the story of Isaac's wife, be sure to reflect on the greater meaning found in the picture
 - We were God's appointed Bride for our Groom
 - We weren't looking for Him, but He found us
 - We received His gifts, a measure of His wealth and His love for us
 - We were bought for a price that He paid in His own body
 - And we have the blessed opportunity to testify to Him by way of our confession
 - One day we will meet Him face to face, and the next phase of our life in Christ will begin
 - And the conclusion of our story next week tells the story of how we move forward as His Bride and ready ourselves for the day we meet Him