

Genesis 24D (2011)

- Today we finish the story of Isaac and his bride to be, Rebekah
 - As we left off, the servant sent to find Rebekah for Abraham had confirmed the marriage with Rebekah's family
 - The servant explained his story of how he was sent to find a bride for Isaac and how the Lord brought him to Rebekah
 - And his story convinced the family that this was a marriage ordained by God
 - So the servant paid the bride price to the family and bestowed gifts to Rebekah
 - And soon they will return to Canaan to meet Isaac
- And of course, God has fashioned these events so that this beautiful story forms a picture of an even more important relationship between Christ and His Bride, the Church
 - As we studied last week, the picture mirrors the events of the story
 - The Servant, the Spirit, goes out into the world to find those who will receive the Lord's proposal
 - And the Father directs the Spirit to those who will respond and causes the Spirit's search to be fruitful
 - And as a person responds to the Gospel, the Spirit responds by betrothing the person to Christ
 - The betrothal includes gifts that seal the relationship and bless the prospective bride in the meantime
 - Then as a result of this new relationship, the Bride has opportunity to give a testimony to her world and family regarding this new relationship
 - And when she testifies by the Spirit, the Lord is glorified
 - And the best testimony comes as a result of the Spirit speaking through us, both in our words and actions
- Rebekah has yet to meet her new husband face to face, so naturally this becomes the next step in the relationship

- But at this point, she's a world away from Isaac and she has a long walk to return to him
 - But she has the company of Abraham's servant to guide her back to her husband
- Before she can leave, however, there is a small matter of her family and their attachment to Rebekah

Gen. 24:54 Then he and the men who were with him ate and drank and spent the night. When they arose in the morning, he said, "Send me away to my master."

Gen. 24:55 But her brother and her mother said, "Let the girl stay with us a few days, say ten; afterward she may go."

- Following the official agreement for Rebekah's marriage and the payment of the bride price, the celebration ensues
 - This is the usual tradition in Eastern marriage practices
 - The representatives of the groom and bride will enjoy a brief celebration at the bride's home
 - Usually this celebration was brief because the bride's family expected a chance to enjoy a larger celebration at a later time
 - The normal tradition for arranged marriages was for the betrothal to be a brief affair
 - Then the bride would remain with her family while the son prepared a home for his bride back at his father's house
 - When the home was ready for the bride, the groom would return to the bride's home to claim his bride
 - When they returned to the father's home, the couple would consummate the marriage
 - And the father's family would celebrate with a seven day feast
 - Once that celebration was completed, the couple returned to the bride's home to continue the celebration at her family's home
 - But in this case, the family knows that Rebekah will be traveling a very long way and will not likely return
 - So whatever celebration they will enjoy must happen now

- When the servant arose in the morning, he is intent on making a quick departure, as would be the custom, and getting started on the long journey back to Abraham
 - It probably took over a month or two of daily walking to make the trip back to Canaan
 - And now that the marriage had been approved, there was no reason to delay any longer
 - But her brother, Laban, and her mother insist that they stay a total of ten days
 - It's interesting to note that the father, Bethuel, plays such a minor role in the entire story
 - Apparently, the household isn't run by the father
 - Instead, he leaves the decisions to his children and his wife
 - This seems to be an intentional contrast in the narrative, between Abraham's leadership in his godly family and the absence of patriarchal leadership in his pagan family
 - The family's request for the deal was understandable, perhaps, but it was also quite excessive
 - Under the circumstances, there was no reason to celebrate for so long, and it was uncustomary to expect such a long delay
- And the servant has no interest in honoring such a request
 - He came here on a mission
 - In fact, his master Abraham is expecting him to return as quickly as possible
 - One of the concerns the servant expressed to Abraham even before he left was that the girl wouldn't want to leave
 - Which is why Abraham released the servant from his oath should the girl not be willing to return
 - And this place isn't his home and these people aren't his people
 - So the servant isn't going to be persuaded by their requests and he is going to continue to push for a rapid return

- Before we move on, it's time we considered what the Lord is teaching us in His word concerning the second story, the picture of Christ and the Church
 - As we come to know the Lord and enter into salvation by faith, we enter into the company of the Spirit, just as Rebekah accompanied Abraham's servant

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.

- The Spirit is our life-long companion provided as a pledge, Paul says
 - The pledge is a downpayment on our eternal inheritance and an assurance we will meet our Groom in the future
 - Just as Rebekah received her bracelets and ring
- And from the moment we receive the Spirit and enter into this relationship, we are awaiting the day when we will finally meet our Groom in person
 - For Rebekah, the delay was created by the distance required to travel to meet Isaac...at least a few weeks or months
 - In our case, the delay is a result of waiting for our death and resurrection
- But in both cases, the delay brings a dilemma...what to do in the meantime?
 - For Rebekah, the challenge was in recognizing the importance of starting her walk back to Isaac without delay
 - The walk was going to be long and arduous and would require some sacrifice
 - By comparison, staying in her family's home was a more comfortable option
 - Plus, her family was pleading for her to stay and they welcomed both Rebekah and the servant to remain as long as possible
- And as the picture suggests, we face a very similar challenge in our new relationship to Christ

- The day we are saved and enter into the relationship, the Spirit has come upon us in our world of relationships and comforts
 - We will have all our old habits and lifestyles and friends
 - We may have family members who haven't entered into this relationship and don't understand the attraction
- But we will also have the company of God's Spirit, His Servant to bring us back to Him
 - And the Spirit will immediately begin a process of persuading us to move away from the world we know and into a walk with Him
 - A walk that leads us closer to Christ
 - His call in our life will be to holiness and to separating ourselves from the world we once knew
- The Scripture calls our departure from the world and our moving toward Christ in the Spirit our sanctification
 - The word literally means to be set apart, to be made more holy, more pleasing to God
 - It's the name we give for the process of yielding to the Spirit's convicting and guiding influence in our lives
 - And to following the Spirit as He accompanies us in life, leading us into a life that is Christ-like
 - This is our upward call of Christ as Paul calls it
 - And that life-long walk of sanctification is pictured here by the servant leading Rebekah back to Isaac
- But that walk will have its challenges, not least of all the attracting influence offered by the world we're leaving behind
 - First, we may find the thought of leaving everything behind too much to accept
 - The world of sin and selfishness is designed by the enemy to appeal to our flesh, and it works
 - But when the Spirit calls us to move away from what we know and toward the unknown of a life with Christ, we may pause

- That upward call of Christ is going to rip us away from the lifestyles, and habits, and various choices that defined our life before Christ
- And the Spirit may also call us away from relationships, friends and even family, that stand in the way of our relationship with our new groom
 - As Christ Himself said

[Matt. 10:32](#) "Therefore everyone who confesses Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven.

[Matt. 10:33](#) "But whoever denies Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father who is in heaven.

[Matt. 10:34](#) "Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword.

[Matt. 10:35](#) "For I came to SET A MAN AGAINST HIS FATHER, AND A DAUGHTER AGAINST HER MOTHER, AND A DAUGHTER-IN-LAW AGAINST HER MOTHER-IN-LAW;

[Matt. 10:36](#) and A MAN'S ENEMIES WILL BE THE MEMBERS OF HIS HOUSEHOLD.

[Matt. 10:37](#) "He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me.

[Matt. 10:38](#) "And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me.

- Just as with Rebekah leaving her family for the last time, these separations will be painful
 - We should expect a fight within us as we try to leave them behind
 - That's why we have the Spirit with us
- The Spirit Who dwells inside us is like that servant accompanying Rebekah
 - He's on a mission
 - The Father sent Him to find us and to escort us back to the Son
- And God's Spirit is singleminded in His task
 - He has no interest in the things of our world
 - He has no affinity for our prior way of life, our ungodly relationships, our various goals

- So He will consistently call upon us to get moving and walk in the right direction, spiritually and physically
 - And the Spirit in us has the power to strengthen our will in the face of these fights
 - But according to God's design, the Spirit's role is to persuade
 - But it remains our decision to obey
- Consider Rebekah as our example again

[Gen. 24:56](#) He said to them, "Do not delay me, since the LORD has prospered my way. Send me away that I may go to my master."

[Gen. 24:57](#) And they said, "We will call the girl and consult her wishes."

[Gen. 24:58](#) Then they called Rebekah and said to her, "Will you go with this man?" And she said, "I will go."

- One day she was living her life ignorant of this possibility
 - Until the servant of Abraham introduced himself
 - And then her entire life was changed in an instant
 - And now she's being called to leave everything she knows behind in exchange for a relationship with her husband
 - Her family is pressing her to remain at home, for as long as possible
- But the servant will not be persuaded by her family, so he presses again for the chance to leave immediately
 - And then the family decides to appeal to Rebekah to make the final decision
 - Although in Middle Eastern tradition it was not usual to ask the bride for her opinion, it was common in the Hurrian culture from where Rebekah came
 - So Rebekah has the right to say whether they will leave or stay ten days
 - And to the question of whether to follow the servant or listen to the voice of the world, Rebekah says plainly, "I will go"
- The Spirit and God's word calls us to make exactly the same kind of decision

- While the Spirit calls us to move forward in sanctification, our flesh, world and our ungodly relationships will continue to pull us backward
 - Ultimately, the decision of which way will go falls to us
- We can say I will stay or I will go
 - I will stay as I am, I will stay where I am, I will stay who I am
 - Or I will go
 - I will follow the Lord's will
 - I will leave behind my sin and sinful choices
 - I will submit to the authority of Christ and His word
 - I will break away from the ungodly influences in my life
- And make no mistake, there is no in between, neither for Rebekah nor for us
 - Rebekah was married and her groom awaited to meet her
 - She was in control of how quickly she moved in Isaac's direction
 - But she was either moving toward him or moving away
 - She either made progress or she didn't
 - The servant didn't give her multiple options on when or where they traveled
 - He said we're leaving now and we're going to Isaac...are you coming with me?
- And the Spirit asks us only one question, fundamentally
 - Are you following me or not? Will you go wherever I ask, do whatever I require, knowing that I lead you to Christ?
 - And when the world tugs at us to make the wrong choice, remember Paul's words

2Cor. 6:14 Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness?

2Cor. 6:15 Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever?

[2Cor. 6:16](#) Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said,

“I WILL DWELL IN THEM AND WALK AMONG THEM;
AND I WILL BE THEIR GOD, AND THEY SHALL BE MY PEOPLE.

[2Cor. 6:17](#) “Therefore, COME OUT FROM THEIR MIDST AND BE SEPARATE,” says the Lord.

“AND DO NOT TOUCH WHAT IS UNCLEAN;
And I will welcome you.

[2Cor. 6:18](#) “And I will be a father to you,

And you shall be sons and daughters to Me,”
Says the Lord Almighty.

- So the time to depart comes

[Gen. 24:59](#) Thus they sent away their sister Rebekah and her nurse with Abraham’s servant and his men.

[Gen. 24:60](#) They blessed Rebekah and said to her,

“May you, our sister,
Become thousands of ten thousands,
And may your descendants possess
The gate of those who hate them.”

[Gen. 24:61](#) Then Rebekah arose with her maids, and they mounted the camels and followed the man. So the servant took Rebekah and departed.

[Gen. 24:62](#) Now Isaac had come from going to Beer-lahai-roi; for he was living in the Negev.

[Gen. 24:63](#) Isaac went out to meditate in the field toward evening; and he lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, camels were coming.

[Gen. 24:64](#) Rebekah lifted up her eyes, and when she saw Isaac she dismounted from the camel.

[Gen. 24:65](#) She said to the servant, “Who is that man walking in the field to meet us?” And the servant said, “He is my master.” Then she took her veil and covered herself.

[Gen. 24:66](#) The servant told Isaac all the things that he had done.

[Gen. 24:67](#) Then Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah’s tent, and he took Rebekah, and she became his wife, and he loved her; thus Isaac was comforted after his mother’s death.

- As they depart, the family pronounces a blessing on Rebekah
 - This would have been a bittersweet departing for the family, knowing they won’t see their daughter again
- And so Rebekah mounts one of the camels and is joined by her maids
 - And the entourage is led by the servant back to Isaac
- Now Isaac was living in the Negev, in Beer-lahai-roi

- This is the place where Hagar encountered the Angel of the Lord and this is land that Isaac now owns because of His father's treaty with Abimelech
 - This is Isaac's home, essentially
 - The home he had prepared for his bride when she arrives
- On one particular evening, Isaac was out in the field, away from his tent, when he saw his servant and the bride coming from a distance
 - Rebekah herself noticed Isaac coming out into the desert to meet her on his camel
 - So she asked the servant who was coming to greet her
 - And the servant responded that this is his master, the one to marry the bride
- In response, Rebekah places a veil over her face
 - This was a customary way for a bride to meet her husband for the first time
 - Typically, the veil was worn until the marriage night and the consummation of the marriage
 - Only then would the veil be lifted
 - And it was the husband's privilege to remove the veil and behold the face of his bride for the first time
- Finally, Isaac learns the story of how his bride was found and delivered
 - And they entered Isaac's tent together and were married fully
 - And Isaac loved Rebekah and was comforted by her
- Can we see one last important connection between this story and our relationship to Christ?
 - First, we know that right now our Husband Christ is living in His Father's home awaiting our meeting
 - And Christ told us that this time away would be a time of preparation for us and for Him

[John 14:2](#) "In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you.

[John 14:3](#) "If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also.

- Christ has promised that He is engaged in preparing a place for us, and then when the place is ready, He will come for us
 - Just as Isaac has prepared a house for Rebekah and was awaiting her arrival
- And when the moment for their meeting comes, it is not the Bride who finds her way to Isaac, though she has been moving closer steadily
 - Instead, the groom comes out to meet his bride
 - Notice that Isaac left his home and began to ride out to meet his bride
- Rebekah required the servant make the introduction
 - And she prepared herself to meet her husband
- So will it be with us as well
 - The Lord will come out of His home just long enough to collect His Bride
 - And when we see Him coming for us, it will take us by surprise and we may not recognize Him at first
 - But the Spirit will have prepared us for that moment and we will have become a spotless Bride, readied for Her Husband
 - And how does Scripture say we will meet our Lord for the first time?

[1Th. 4:14](#) For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus.

[1Th. 4:15](#) For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep.

[1Th. 4:16](#) For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first.

[1Th. 4:17](#) Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord.

[1Th. 4:18](#) Therefore comfort one another with these words.

- We call this moment “the rapture”, from a teaching Paul gave in 1 Corinthians 15
 - This is the moment of our resurrection
 - When the Lord will descend to the air and call all Church saints, those who make up the Bride of Christ, to rise in the resurrection
 - Both those who have died in the body and those who remain alive will rise
 - And we will be like Rebekah, seeing our Groom coming for us
 - And we will rejoice at the union and enter into the Father’s glory to remain with him forever
- This is the promise we all have in Christ through faith
 - And we eagerly look forward to that moment, even as we walk with the Spirit every day between now and then