

Genesis 24 • The Servant & the Bride

Introduction

Now He said to them, "These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled." Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures,
— Luke 24:44-45

The only Scriptures which existed at the time were found in the Old Testament. In Jesus' day all the books of the Old Testament belonged to one of three categories: the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms. In other words, Jesus was able to use the entire Old Testament to explain how it was a shadow of an ultimate fulfillment to come in the New Testament. This lesson illustrates how this might be accomplished, because we can find many parallels to the characters and their respective actions in this story to a greater fulfillment of figures and events to come. It also illustrates how every bride in Scripture teaches something about the ultimate Bride of Christ and every good servant teaches something about our own quality of service to Christ our Master.

¹Now Abraham was old, advanced in age; and the LORD had blessed Abraham in every way. ²Abraham said to his servant, the oldest of his household, who had charge of all that he owned, "Please place your hand under my thigh, ³and I will make you swear by the LORD, the God of heaven and the God of earth, that you shall not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I live, ⁴but you will go to my country and to my relatives, and take a wife for my son Isaac."

⁵The servant said to him, "Suppose the woman is not willing to follow me to this land; should I take your son back to the land from where you came?"

⁶Then Abraham said to him, "Beware that you do not take my son back there! ⁷The LORD, the God of heaven, who took me from my father's house and from the land of my birth, and who spoke to me and who swore to me, saying, 'To your descendants I will give this land,' He will send His angel before you, and you will take a wife for my son from there. ⁸But if the woman is not willing to follow you, then you will be free from this my oath; only do not take my son back there."

⁹So the servant placed his hand under the thigh of Abraham his master, and swore to him concerning this matter.

[Read v.1-9]

Q: What do we know from previous events what makes Isaac special?

A: Isaac was God's possession, offered on the altar and redeemed by God. It was through Isaac that God promised to make a covenant (Gen. 17:21) and through whom Abraham's "descendants shall be named". (Gen. 21:12)

Point: Even though Ishmael was actually Abraham's firstborn through the concubine Hagar at the urging of Sarah, God does not recognize him as such because Isaac is the promised son to come according to God's will and timing. That born of the Spirit always takes precedence over that born of the flesh.

Q: How does this relate to how Abraham knew that God would supply the need of a wife for Isaac?

A: Abraham trusted the promises of God to provide for the need the same way Abraham trusted God to take care of things when he went to sacrifice Isaac.

Application: How well do we seek to be obedient in accordance with God's Word in all our life situations, especially the big ones such as marriage, vocation, ministry, etc.? Do we lack God's direction because we did not actually seek it out to begin with?

Trust in the LORD with all your heart
And do not lean on your own understanding.
In all your ways acknowledge Him,
And He will make your paths straight.
— Proverbs 3:5-6

Q: What are the three things Abraham made the servant swear to?

1. He would not select Isaac's wife from among the Canaanite women. (v.3)
2. He would choose Isaac's wife from among Abraham's relatives. (v.4)
3. He would not take Isaac back to Abraham's former home/land. (v.6)

Q: Why do you suppose that Abraham specifically wanted a bride from what we might call "the family of God"?

A: Throughout Scripture is the repeated story of what happens when a marriage takes place with someone dedicated to another god or religion. Abraham does not want to join "the son of promise" to a Canaanite who

worships another god or someone representative of the old life from which he was saved out of.

Q: What does Abraham twice command which affirms that this is his intention?

A: In both v.6 & 8 he commands, “[D]o not take my son back there”. Abraham would rather do without than risk returning to the old life he has forsaken for the new in the One True God.

Q: How might this be a picture of what is to come in the New Testament?

A: It represents the heavenly Father choosing a Bride (the Church) for His Son who would not be clinging to the old life but dedicated exclusively and faithfully to Christ the Son alone.

Point: *We most often emphasize that the Son is the Father’s love gift to the world (Jn. 3:16), but we forget that His Bride, the Church, is actually the Father’s love gift to His Son. (Jn. 17:2, 6, 9, 11-12, 24)*

Application: *Abraham is an example of dedication, choosing to live and make every decision in accordance with God’s promises.*

All these died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance, and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. For those who say such things make it clear that they are seeking a country of their own. And indeed if they had been thinking of that country from which they went out, they would have had opportunity to return. But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for He has prepared a city for them.

— Hebrews 11:13-16

[Read v.10-49]

Q: What is probably the really obvious example in this passage we need to apply to our life?

A: The role and attitude of a servant.

Q: We do not know the servant’s name, who remains anonymous, but what is the servant’s favorite name for Abraham which he uses repeatedly?

A: “My master”. A servant lives and serves only to please his master.

Q: What should we learn from the way this servant handled his master’s orders?

A: After receiving his orders he did not change them but eagerly sought to carry them out to the letter. Likewise we should be obedient to the whole of God’s Word already given us, eager to carry out His will according to every letter of His Word. Like this servant who will ultimately give an account to his master of all he did (v.66), so too shall we.

Now, little children, abide in Him, so that when He appears, we may have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming.

— 1 John 2:28

¹⁰Then the servant took ten camels from the camels of his master, and set out with a variety of good things of his master’s in his hand; and he arose and went to Mesopotamia, to the city of Nahor. ¹¹He made the camels kneel down outside the city by the well of water at evening time, the time when women go out to draw water. ¹²He said, “O LORD, the God of my master Abraham, please grant me success today, and show lovingkindness to my master Abraham. ¹³Behold, I am standing by the spring, and the daughters of the men of the city are coming out to draw water; ¹⁴now 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.”

¹⁵Before 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

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her jar on her shoulder. ¹⁶The 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. ¹⁷Then the servant ran to meet her, and said, "Please let me drink a little water from your jar."

¹⁸She said, "Drink, my lord"; and she quickly lowered her jar to her hand, and gave him a drink. ¹⁹Now when she had finished giving him a drink, she said, "I will draw also for your camels until they have finished drinking."

²⁰So she quickly emptied her jar into the trough, and ran back to the well to draw, and she drew for all his camels. ²¹Meanwhile, the man was gazing at her in silence, to know whether the LORD had made his journey successful or not.

²²When 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, ²³and said, "Whose daughter are you? Please tell me, is there room for us to lodge in your father's house?"

²⁴She said to him, "I am the daughter of Bethuel, the son of Milcah, whom she bore to Nahor." ²⁵Again she said to him, "We have plenty of both straw and feed, and room to lodge in."

²⁶Then the man bowed low and worshiped the LORD. ²⁷He 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."

²⁸Then the girl ran and told her mother's household about these things. ²⁹Now Rebekah had a brother whose name was Laban; and Laban ran outside to the man at the spring. ³⁰When 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. ³¹And 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?"

³²So 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. ³³But when food was set

But you, why do you judge your brother? Or you again, why do you regard your brother with contempt? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God. For it is written, "AS I LIVE, SAYS THE LORD, EVERY KNEE SHALL BOW TO ME, AND EVERY TONGUE SHALL GIVE PRAISE TO GOD." So then each one of us will give an account of himself to God.

— Romans 14:10-12

Q: How did the servant go about finding the right woman for his master's son?

A: He acted in faith in the God of Abraham and Isaac. (v.12) In other words, he believed the promise of God and trusted to be directed by Him. (v.27)

Q: What did the servant specifically do?

A: He took time to pray and ask God for help (v.12-14), but he kept his eyes open to see what God might do.

Q: What might be particularly enlightening about the timing of God's answer to Isaac's prayer?

A: While the servant was praying, God was **already** sending the answer to his prayer!

"It will also come to pass that before they call, I will answer; and while they are still speaking, I will hear."

— Isaiah 65:24

Q: What might we learn from the servant as he observed his prayer being answered?

A: His reaction in v.21 tells us that he was not impulsive, but waited on the Lord to see what He might do.

Q: How would the servant testify to the overall process which brought him success where his master's will was concerned?

A: "...the LORD has guided me..." (v.27) He was not self-focused but God-focused.

Q: What might speak to the quality of the servant's devotion to his master's will?

A: He was so anxious to finish his task that he cared nothing for food. (v.33)

Application: *What happens when we put physical things ahead of the spiritual?*

The Example of the Servant: *He believed in prayer, knew how to wait on the Lord, and was obedient to every word and instruction of his master. He is the ultimate example of devotion.*

Q: How is the servant a type, or example, of the Holy Spirit?

1. The work of the Holy Spirit is to bring the lost to Christ who make up His Bride.
2. Just as the ministry of the Holy Spirit is to always point to Christ and glorify Him, the servant's name is not given in avoidance of personal glory.
3. The Holy Spirit has been sent to represent Christ and to do His will here on earth just as the servant so represented his master's will and son.
4. As in the character of the Holy Spirit, the servant did not speak about himself but his master and his riches. (Jn. 15:26; 16:13-14)

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before him to eat, he said, "I will not eat until I have told my business."

And he said, "Speak on."

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

³⁵The 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. ³⁶Now Sarah my master's wife bore a son to my master in her old age, and he has given him all that he has. ³⁷My 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; ³⁸but you shall go to my father's house and to my relatives, and take a wife for my son.' ³⁹I said to my master, 'Suppose the woman does not follow me.' ⁴⁰He 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; ⁴¹then 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.'

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; ⁴³behold, 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"; ⁴⁴and 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.'

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.' ⁴⁶She 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. ⁴⁷Then 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. ⁴⁸And 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. ⁴⁹So now if you are going to deal kindly and

5. The servant carried a portion of his master's wealth, just as the Holy Spirit "is given as a pledge of our inheritance". (Eph. 1:14)
6. Like the Holy Spirit drawing people to Christ, the servant did not argue or bribe but simply bore witness to the greatness of his master. He did not force a marriage but merely gave her the facts and the opportunity to make a decision. (Jn. 16:7-11)
7. Others?

Q: Who is the second most dominant figure in this passage?

A: Rebekah, the bride.

Q: Why might it be significant that it all started with a simple and even menial request for water?

A: Faithfulness in the bigger things in life can only come by first being faithful in the smaller things. Performing a humble task for a stranger proved a faithfulness to the small things which led to becoming a bride of a wealthy man who was in a covenant relationship with God—faithfulness in much bigger things.

Q: What would it mean to water ten camels? What kind of effort would it take?

A: After a long trek, a single camel might drink as much as forty gallons of water, all of which she would have to draw by hand.

Q: Why do you suppose the servant observed her silently? (v.21) What was he probably doing?

A: Firstly, he seems to be waiting to make sure the entire task, and therefore all the conditions, are met. Secondly, most likely he was also observing the qualities which would make for a good wife, seeing that she was kind, pleasant, humble, healthy and a hard worker. She not only met the pedigree set out by his master, but in those times would have stood out as an example of the best things desired in such arranged marriages.

Q: What is the greater lesson behind the servant's question, "Whose daughter are you?" (v.23)

A: We would apply this to ourselves in answering whether we are a child of God and to whom our allegiance truly belongs. The literal question has a spiritual application for us as well.

The Example of Rebekah: She is also an example of devotion in her attitude, spirit and work ethic, an example of the family that raised her to act appropriately even when away from their presence.

Application: The servant and Rebekah are examples of devotion, adhering to more than the minimum standards in the course of obedience to their masters over them.

truly with my master, tell me; and if not, let me know, that I may turn to the right hand or the left.”

⁵⁰Then Laban and Bethuel replied, “The matter comes from the LORD; so we cannot speak to you bad or good. ⁵¹Here is Rebekah before you, take her and go, and let her be the wife of your master’s son, as the LORD has spoken.”

⁵²When Abraham’s servant heard their words, he bowed himself to the ground before the LORD. ⁵³The 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. ⁵⁴Then 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.”

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

⁵⁶He said to them, “Do not delay me, since the LORD has prospered my way. Send me away that I may go to my master.”

⁵⁷And they said, “We will call the girl and consult her wishes.” ⁵⁸Then they called Rebekah and said to her, “Will you go with this man?”

And she said, “I will go.”

⁵⁹Thus they sent away their sister Rebekah and her nurse with Abraham’s servant and his men. ⁶⁰They 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.”

[Read v.50-60]

Q: So what is the greater spiritual representation of what is taking place between Rebekah and Isaac? How does this foreshadow a greater event in the New Testament to come?

A: It is an Old Testament type—or illustration, of Christ and His Bride.

Q: How does the family’s reluctance to let Rebekah leave right away reflect the obstacles we face in heeding our call to Christ?

A: The world wants us to stay with them as long as possible. (v.55)

Q: What are some of the arguments they could have made to Rebekah?

1. “You have never actually seen this man”.
2. “Perhaps the servant is a fraud or con-man”.
3. “It is a very hard journey—over 500 miles to where Isaac lives”.
4. “You may never see your family again”.
5. Others?

Application: These are relate to the arguments made by the world and those who would rather not see us make decision for Christ.

Q: Why did Rebekah go? What did she ultimately do?

A: She made a decision of faith based on the evidence and testimony provided by the servant. She believed what she heard about Isaac and acted upon it, wanting to belong to him for the rest of her life after seeing the proof of his greatness, generosity and wealth.

In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, so that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ; and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory,

— 1 Peter 1:6-8

Application: This is how it works for the unsaved today: it is a decision of faith based on the evidence provided by the Holy Spirit through the Word and witness of the Church.

Q: Why was the servant so persistent?

A: Just as the servant would not delay in presenting his testimony (v.33), neither would he delay in completing his mission. (v.56) This is the decision every sinner must make, whether to continue in their present life or to be “married” to Christ and begin the journey to a new home.

Going on from there He saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and He called them. Immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed Him.

— Matthew 4:21-22

Q: How does this account reveal something about the tension between God's calling and free will?

A: It is clear that God chose Rebekah for Isaac as His leading and guidance is seen in every step of the way, yet Rebekah still had to make her own decision for Isaac.

Point: *There is no conflict between God's plan (His sovereignty) and the exercise of choice and free will (human responsibility). "All that the Father gives Me will come to Me [divine sovereignty], and the one who comes to Me [human responsibility] I will certainly not cast out". (Jn. 6:37)*

Q: What was the ultimate result of Rebekah's decision?

A: By faith she pursued Isaac, the son of promise, and became an integral part of his plans and dominion. If she had remained where she was, despite being a "good and nice" person, we never would have heard of her again. It's a picture of the difference between accepting and pursuing Christ versus remaining in the old life. Her ultimate testimony is her response and follow-up action, "I will go". (v.58)

Application: *Rebekah is an example of the crossroads at which every person ultimately finds themselves: decision. Will you proceed by faith or will you remain where you are in sin?*

[Read v.61-67]

⁶¹Then Rebekah arose with her maids, and they mounted the camels and followed the man. So the servant took Rebekah and departed.

⁶²Now Isaac had come from going to Beer-lahai-roi; for he was living in the Negev. ⁶³Isaac went out to meditate in the field toward evening; and he lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, camels were coming. ⁶⁴Rebekah lifted up her eyes, and when she saw Isaac she dismounted from the camel. ⁶⁵She 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. ⁶⁶The servant told Isaac all the things that he had done.

⁶⁷Then 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.

Q: What does Isaac foreshadow in the New Testament?

A: He is a picture of our Lord Jesus Christ in his miraculous birth, (Gen. 21) in his willingness to obey his father and give his life, (Gen. 22) and the fact that Scripture omits his return from Mt. Moriah with his father and he next appears here may reflect the ascension of Christ who returned to glory to wait for the time to receive His Bride.

Q: What is the significance of Beer-lahai-roi?

A: It literally means, "the well of the living one who sees me". It is the name Hagar gave to the place where she came face-to-face with "the angel of the Lord" (an Old Testament Christophany or appearance of Christ in Gen. 16) and was promised that she would bear a son.

Point: *Isaac, the son of promise, is coming from the place where God made a promise of a son to come.*

Q: What is one of the chief differences between Abraham and Isaac?

A: Abraham, the father, is repeatedly identified with altars, whereas Isaac, the son, is repeatedly identified with wells. It is a picture of the Godhead and the biblical role of the water and the blood.

Q: What can we glean to be the chief differences between Isaac and Rebekah?

A: From v.63 we see that Isaac was a quiet, meditative man who contemplated the things of the Lord in solitude, (Ps. 1:2) whereas Sarah was more active and outgoing.

Q: How might this contribute something to understanding why she covered herself up?

A: It was not just an outward symbol of modesty of that time and culture, but also visible submission to Isaac's authority.

Q: What might be significant about the time of day when Isaac and Rebekah came together?

A: It was “toward evening”. (v.53) The most prolific biblical references to the Return of Christ for His Bride is always in darkness or at night. (SS 3:1-5; Is. 21:11; Mt. 24:42-44; Mt. 25:1-13; Jn. 9:4; 1 Th. 5:2)

Q: Did the meeting involve only the meeting of the bride and bridegroom?

A: The servant gave an account of himself to his master’s son. (v.66)

Point: *When Christ comes for His Church there will not only be a wedding (Rev. 19:1-9), but also a judgment seat (Rom. 14:10-13; 2 Co. 5:9-10) when our works will be examined and rewards given out. (1 Co. 3:13-15; 4:1-5)*

Q: How do we see the working of the Holy Spirit overall?

A: Originally Rebekah was given token gifts as a deposit or guarantee of what was to come. Now that she has come together with her bridegroom they are one and she possesses everything he possesses. (Eph. 5:22-33)

Application: *Having made the journey by faith, the Bride is welcomed by the Bridegroom and receives all that was promised, forever joined with Him.*

Overall Application

If you trust Christ and say, “I will go”, the Holy Spirit will provide a deposit guaranteeing what is to come and guide you by the Word and fellowship with others to the Wedding Feast of the Lamb as His Bride.

If you already belong to Christ, then like the faithful servant we need to share the Gospel with others about the marriage and the wedding feast to come, inviting them to say, “I will go”.