

Part 5 Rebekah: The Extravagant Heart of the Bride (Genesis 24)

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. Genesis 24 tells two dramatic stories at the same time. One is spiritual and the other is natural. The two stories overlap and intersect at significant points. The spiritual story tells of the Father’s commitment to find a Bride for His Son. It is told symbolically in the natural story of Abraham’s commitment to find a bride for his son Isaac. The details in the natural story illustrate truths that are taught in the New Testament. Every detail does not correspond to a truth. Some events in the Old Testament illustrate New Testament truths (1 Cor. 10:4; Gal. 4:24; Eph. 5:32; Heb. 11:19).
- B. ***Abraham***: pictures the heart of God the Father filled with zeal to provide a wife for His Son.
- C. ***Isaac***: is a type of Christ (Gal. 4:24; Heb. 11:19). Paul’s treatment of the Ishmael-Isaac story is referred to as “symbolic” (NKJV), “figurative” (NIV), or as an allegory (NAS).
²²Abraham had two sons...²³he who was of the bondwoman [Ishmael] was born according to the flesh, and he [Isaac] of the freewoman...²⁴ which things are symbolic... (Gal. 4:22-24)
¹⁷Abraham...offered up Isaac...¹⁹concluding that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead, from which he also received him [Isaac] in a figurative sense. (Heb. 11:17-19)
- D. ***Abraham’s servant***: a type of the Holy Spirit’s ministry. He is the only servant in the Father’s house who rules all of His house (v. 2) and is entrusted with all of the Father’s goods (v. 10).
- E. ***Rebekah***: is a type of the Church as the Bride of Christ. She speaks of the Bride who wholeheartedly responds to the Spirit and experiences the riches of grace (Eph. 1:7, 2:7; 3:8).
⁷We have redemption through His blood...according to the riches of His grace... (Eph. 1:7)
- F. ***The storyline***: Jesus declared that the Father’s plan was to arrange a wedding for His Son. The Father sends His most trusted servant, the Holy Spirit, on a mission to prepare a Bride for His Son. The Bride must voluntarily and extravagantly respond to God during this journey through the wilderness to the wedding. Natural history ends with a celebration of the full success of the Father’s glorious plan to have a Bride ready, one who lives with extravagant love and obedience.
²The kingdom of heaven is like a...king who arranged a marriage for his son... (Mt. 22:2)
*⁶The voice of a great multitude...saying, “Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns!
⁷Let us be glad...for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready”...⁹Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb! (Rev. 19:6-9)*
- G. This is not a story of how the bride became saved, but of how grace strengthened her to live in the wholeheartedness of the “bridal ideal.” She enters the story as one already in the “faith of Abraham”; we see her journey to walk out her wholeheartedness. This is a story of how to live in abandonment to God, not how to receive forgiveness of sin so that we go to heaven when we die.

II. THE FATHER’S PLAN: TO TAKE A WIFE FOR HIS SON (GEN. 24:1-4)

²*Abraham said to the oldest servant of his house, who ruled over all that he had...³ “I will make you swear...⁴ you shall go to my country and my family, and take a wife for my son Isaac.” (Gen. 24:2-4)*

- A. ***Servant who ruled over all:*** Abraham sent an elderly servant who ruled over all he had (v. 2). This speaks of the servant ministry of the Holy Spirit.
- B. ***Take a wife:*** The Spirit’s mandate is to prepare an equally yoked Bride for Jesus. Jesus declared the Father’s great plan in arranging a wedding for His Son (Mt. 22:2).
²*The kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who arranged a marriage for his son. (Mt. 22:2)*
- C. ***Swear:*** The servant makes a solemn oath to complete Abraham’s plan to take a wife for his son. Here, we see the Holy Spirit’s commitment and determination to prepare a Bride for Jesus.
- D. ***You shall go:*** Speaks of the active ministry of the Spirit. We can only succeed as we participate with the Spirit’s work, as He goes forth in our personal lives and with His plan in the nations.

III. THE HOLY SPIRIT’S COMMITMENT TO GOD’S PLAN (GEN. 24:5-10)

⁵*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 [Babylon]?”⁶ Abraham said to him, “Beware that you do not take my son back there.⁷ The LORD...took me from...the land of my family...and swore to me, saying, ‘To your descendants I give this land [Israel],’ He will send His angel before you, and you shall take a wife for my son...⁸ If the woman is not willing to follow you, then you will be released from this oath...”⁹ The servant...swore to him concerning this matter. (Gen. 24:5-9)*

- A. ***Willing:*** The issue of the Bride’s free will is emphasized throughout the story (v. 5, 8, 39). The necessity of making our own choices is essential to love. So much is in the balance of our free will. There is no substitute for choosing obedience and love. No one can do it for you.
- B. ***The angel:*** Abraham promised the Spirit’s help and guidance throughout the process of preparing the bride. Supernatural assistance is given to us, including the ministry of angels.
- C. ***Do not take my son back there:*** Abraham was from Ur of the Chaldeans, which became the Babylonian Empire. The end-time bride is to come out of Babylon (Rev. 18:4).
- D. ***I give this land:*** The land of Israel is central to the Father’s plan for Jesus to rule the earth with His Bride. The marriage supper occurs in relationship to the time of the resurrection and when Jesus returns to Jerusalem and calls it married to the Lord (Isa. 62:1, 4-5; Rev. 19:7-21).

¹*For Jerusalem’s sake I will not rest until her righteousness goes forth...⁴ You shall be called Hephzibah, and your land Beulah; for the Lord delights in you, and your land shall be married...
⁵*As the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall God rejoice over you. (Isa. 62:1-5)**

IV. THE PROMISE OF SUPERNATURAL HELP (GEN. 24:10-14)

¹⁰*The servant took ten of his master's camels and departed, for all his master's goods were in his hand. And he arose and went to Mesopotamia, to the city of Nahor. ¹¹He 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. ¹²Then he said, "O LORD...please give me success this day..." ¹³I stand here by the well of water, and the daughters of the men of the city are coming out to draw water. ¹⁴Now 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." (Gen. 24:10-14)*

- A. **City of Nahor:** It was about a two-week journey from Abraham's home in Hebron to Nahor.
- B. **Ten camels and all of Abraham's goods:** This speaks of the riches of God's grace, the gifts of the Spirit, and God's abundant provision available to all who will receive it (Eph. 1:7; 2:7; 3:8).
- C. **Well of water:** The salvation story throughout the Scripture is often told in relation to wells of water or rivers. The Spirit encounters us in the place of our thirst, as we seek to be satisfied.
- D. **Prayer:** The servant asks God for help (v. 12-14). The importance of prayer in God's plan to prepare the Bride is emphasized here. Prayer is dialogue with God's heart and is foundational to the bridal relationship. God speaks and moves our hearts, and then we speak and move His heart.
- E. **I will know:** he looked for two signs: her extravagant response, and being in Abraham's family.

V. THE HEART OF THE BRIDE: EXTRAVAGANT RESPONSIVENESS (GEN. 24:15-21)

¹⁵*It happened, before he had finished speaking, that behold, Rebekah, who was born to Bethuel, son of...Nahor, Abraham's brother, came out with her pitcher on her shoulder. ¹⁶Now the young woman was very beautiful to behold, a virgin...and she went down to the well, filled her pitcher, and came up. ¹⁷And the servant ran to meet her and said, "Please let me drink a little water from your pitcher." ¹⁸...She quickly let her pitcher down to her hand, and gave him a drink. ¹⁹...She said, "I will draw water for your camels also..." ²⁰She quickly emptied her pitcher into the trough, ran back to the well...and drew for all his camels. ²¹The man, wondering at her, remained silent... (Gen. 24:15-21)*

- A. **I will draw water for your camels also:** She responded quickly and extravagantly (v. 18, 20, 28). The servant only asked her for a little response (v. 17), but she gave an extravagant one (v. 19). Here we see the heart of the Bride as God intended. The Spirit is looking for an extravagant response from us. When the Spirit asks us for a small response, He is giving us the opportunity to give an extravagant response. The heart of the Bride goes far beyond the call of duty (Song 8:7).
- B. Note: Camels can drink up to 50 gallons in one sitting. Ten camels would require 500 gallons of water (weighing 8 pounds/gallon). She moved 4,000 pounds of water between the well and the trough. If she took ten gallons per trip, at 5 minutes a trip, it would have taken her about 5 hours.

- C. ***Jesus' view of His Bride:*** We are beautiful to God and stand as a pure virgin in His sight (v. 16).
1. ***Beautiful:*** All believers are made beautiful to God. He gives us beauty for ashes.
³*To give them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning (Isa. 61:3)*
¹⁷*And let the beauty of the LORD our God be upon us. (Ps. 90:17)*
 2. ***Virgin:*** All believers stand before God as a virgin because of Jesus' righteousness (2 Cor. 5:21). The gift of righteousness makes each believer a pure virgin to Jesus. The Bride is holy and spotless, receiving both imputed and imparted righteousness (Eph. 5:27).
²*...that I [Paul] may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. (2 Cor. 11:2)*
- D. ***The servant ran:*** The servant ran to her (v. 17), illustrating the Spirit's zeal to help us. We can be taken aback by the Spirit's zeal in pursuing us, since we are often unaware of His great plans.
- E. ***Until they finished drinking:*** She did not stop until all ten camels had finished (v. 19). Perseverance and follow-through are necessary to wholeheartedness. Many begin well, but get sidetracked. We can say yes or no to the assignment, but we do not choose the assignment itself.

VI. MANIFESTATIONS OF THE RICHES OF GOD'S GRACE (GEN. 24:22-27)

²²*When the camels had finished drinking...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*we have both straw and feed enough, and room to lodge."* ²⁶*Then the man...worshiped the LORD.* ²⁷*And he said, "Blessed be the LORD God...who has not forsaken His mercy and His truth toward my master. As for me, being on the way, the LORD led me to the house of my master's brethren." (Gen. 24:22-27)*

- A. ***Nose ring and bracelets:*** He gives her a nose ring and two bracelets (v. 22, 30, 47). These are evidences that she is receiving the grace of God. These are manifestations of the anointing of the Spirit on her. Initial blessings are meant to woo us to greater abandonment to Jesus (Rom. 2:4).
- B. This story is not about how the Bride receives salvation. She is already in the household of faith. This is about how she is drawn into a wholehearted response, to the lifestyle of the Bride.
- C. ***Room to lodge:*** The servant's requests increased from, "Give me a drink" to "Can we stay in your house?" When we say yes to the Spirit, He will ask for more abandonment. One measure of obedience gives us the courage to embrace the next. The Spirit's call increases as we have more encounters with Him. First, she received gold (v. 22). Next, he asked to stay at her house (v. 23). She received more gold and silver and clothing (v 53). Finally, he called her to come to the promised land to marry the son (v 58). Will we invite the Spirit to our home, which is often our most private setting? Or are we content to meet with Him occasionally at the well?

- D. **Worshiped:** After she confirmed her lineage in Abraham’s family, then he worshiped (v. 26). The servant worshiped twice in this story, here and after Laban consented to give Rebecca to marry Isaac (v. 26, 52). This speaks of the Spirit’s joy in the unfolding of God’s plan step by step. He is not a passive observer, but a fully engaged participant. This spirit of celebration will occur when all see the Bride prepared for the wedding day, fulfilling God’s plans (Rev. 19:1-9).
⁶*The voice of a great multitude...saying, “Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns...
⁷For the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready.” (Rev. 19:6-7)*
- E. **Mercy and truth:** Mercy and truth are essential elements, manifest in all the events in the story.

VII. ENTHUSIASTIC TELLING OF THE STORY OF REDEMPTION (GEN. 24:28-30)

²⁸*So the young woman ran and told her mother’s household these things. ²⁹Now Rebekah had a brother whose name was Laban, and Laban ran out to the man by the well. ³⁰So 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...he went to the man. And there he stood by the camels at the well. (Gen. 24:28-30)*

- A. **Rebekah ran:** She ran to tell the story. Telling the story is key to the unfolding of God’s plan.
- B. **Laban ran to the well:** Rebekah’s story provoked her brother Laban to run to the well (v. 29). He saw the evidences of grace on her (v. 30). Laban stood at the well waiting for his own encounter. By testifying of our experiences in God, we help others run to the well to meet the servant. Jesus asked a woman at a well for a drink. She ran to tell the story causing many to come (Jn. 4:7-30).

VIII. HONORING THE HOLY SPIRIT (GEN. 24:31-36)

³¹*And he said, “Come in, O blessed of the LORD! Why do you stand outside? For I have prepared the house...” ³²The man came to the house. 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. ³³Food was set before him to eat, but he said, “I will not eat until I have told about my errand.” He said, “Speak on.” ³⁴He said, “I am Abraham’s servant.” ³⁵...My master...has become great... ³⁶Sarah my master’s wife bore a son...when she was old...to him he has given all that he has.” (Gen. 24:31-36)*

- A. **Come in:** Laban invited the servant to stay in his home (v. 31). We must value the presence of the Spirit enough to continually invite him in to dwell with us, not just to occasionally visit us. We must prepare ourselves for the Spirit’s continual presence.
- B. **Will not eat:** The servant refuses to eat until he tells the story to the family (v. 33). The servant tells the story of the divine assignment that he was on (v. 34-48). Here we see the zeal and focus of the Spirit to tell the story throughout the whole world (Mt. 24:14). The Spirit’s purpose in telling the whole family the story is to move them into abandonment.
- C. **I am Abraham’s servant:** He does not tell us his name or story (Jn. 1:23). The Spirit focuses on the testimony of Jesus and the plan of the Father from the foundation of the earth.

IX. THE HOLY SPIRIT WAITS FOR OUR RESPONSE (GEN. 24:49-53)

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.” ⁵⁰Then Laban and Bethuel answered and said, “The thing comes from the LORD...” ⁵¹Here is Rebekah before you; take her and go, and let her be your master’s sons wife...” ⁵²When Abraham’s servant heard their words...he worshiped the LORD... ⁵³Then 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. (Gen. 24:49-53)

- A. Take her and go: They agreed to fully embrace Abraham’s plan by letting her go with them.
- B. Jewelry and clothing: The servant gave her more gold with clothing as a bridal dowry (v. 53).
⁸“I swore an oath to you and entered into a covenant with you...” says the Lord GOD...
¹¹I adorned you with ornaments, put bracelets on your wrists... ¹²I put a jewel in your nose...
¹³You were adorned with gold and silver, and your clothing was of fine linen...you were exceedingly beautiful, and succeeded to royalty. ¹⁴Your fame went out among the nations because of your beauty, for it was perfect through My splendor...” (Ezek. 16:8-14)

X. THE BRIDE’S VOLUNTARY LOVE TO GO ON THE JOURNEY (GEN. 24:54-61)

⁵⁴And he and the men who were with him ate and drank and stayed all night. Then they arose in the morning, and he said, “Send me away to my master.” ⁵⁵But her brother and her mother said, “Let the young woman stay with us a few days, at least ten; after that she may go.” ⁵⁶And he said to them, “Do not hinder me...send me away so that I may go to my master.” ⁵⁷So they said, “We will call the young woman and ask her personally.” ⁵⁸Then they called Rebekah and said to her, “Will you go with this man?” And she said, “I will go.” ⁵⁹So they sent away Rebekah their sister and her nurse, and Abraham’s servant and his men. ⁶⁰And 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.” ⁶¹Then Rebekah and her maids arose, and they rode on the camels and followed the man. So the servant took Rebekah and departed. (Gen. 24:54-61)

¹⁰Listen, O daughter...incline your ear; forget your people and your father’s house; ¹¹then the King will desire your beauty; because He is your Lord, bow down to Him. (Ps. 45:10-11, NAS)

XI. ENCOUNTERING THE BRIDEGROOM (GEN. 24:62-67)

⁶²Isaac came from the way...in the South. ⁶³And Isaac went out to meditate in the field in the evening; and he lifted his eyes and looked, and there, the camels were coming... ⁶⁶The servant told Isaac all the things that he had done... ⁶⁷She became his wife, and he loved her. (Gen. 24:62-67)

- A. The camels were coming: The camels speak of the bride coming through the wilderness, being carried with the riches of grace. Jesus watches with confidence as the “camels are coming.”
- B. She became his wife and he loved her: Rebekah became his wife and he loved her (v. 67). Experiencing Jesus’ love is the ultimate reality as seen in John 15:9-11 and Ephesians 3:18.