

First Things – Genesis
Genesis 24
“Matchmaker International”

I. THE PLAN FOR THE WIFE OF A SON

- A. Who Isaac would love
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II. THE PROVIDENCE IN THE WORK OF A SERVANT

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1. There is no denying the fact that the way people meet and marry has changed drastically over the last 50 years.

2. With the advent of the internet it is not unusual for a couple to meet online long before they meet in person.

3. A couple of years ago, a study found that some 14% of newlywed couples met using an online dating service.ⁱ

4. In Genesis chapter 24, Abraham faced the challenge of finding a wife for his son, Isaac.

5. Were Abraham alive today, he could have used the online, Jewish matchmaking service, *sawyouatsinai.com* (I'm not kidding), which matches Jewish singles from around the world.

6. What Abraham *did* was to send his trusted servant back to his homeland and his people, believing that His God was able to lead him to the right girl for his boy.

7. Genesis chapter 24 is the longest chapter in the book, and it is a chapter long loved by the people of God. The old Scottish preacher, Alexander Whyte said, "...a sweeter chapter was never written than the twenty-fourth of Genesis..."ⁱⁱ

8. It is, for all intensive purposes, a love story. Though it is quite different from our modern notions of romance, it is still a story of two people falling in love and joining in marriage.

9. With that being said, this long chapter is given to us as more than just a record of how a couple got together. In it there are great truths for our lives and for our faith.

10. This story of international matchmaking speaks to us ultimately of the way in which we come to know Jesus, our heavenly Bridegroom.

11. Look with me at this great chapter, and consider what we find in it. First of all, we find here:

I. THE PLAN FOR THE WIFE OF A SON

1. The chapter begins by telling us that, “...*Abraham was old, and well stricken in age: and the LORD had blessed Abraham in all things.*”
2. The old friend of God was nearing the end of his long journey. His had been a full and a blessed life.
3. Before it came to a close, however, Abraham wanted to insure that Isaac would have a wife to spend his life with, as he had with Sarah.
4. While parents today aren't usually involved in the choosing of their children's mate, they should still have as much concern for their children's spiritual and personal well-being, as Abraham did for Isaac.
5. With that in mind, consider with me Abraham's plan for the wife of Isaac, and what it says to us about our own children and our concerns for their lives.
6. First of all, Abraham's plan involved:

A. Who Isaac would love

1. Before the search for Isaac's bride began, Abraham called his closest and most trusted servant to his side, and asked him to swear a solemn oath regarding the type of girl he would find.
2. In verses 3 and 4, Abraham said to the servant, “...*I will make thee swear by the LORD, the God of heaven, and the God of the earth, that thou shalt not take a wife unto my son of the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell. But thou shalt go unto my country, and to my kindred, and take a wife unto my son Isaac.*”
3. This was not a racist request from Abraham. It was a sign of his concern for the faithfulness of Isaac.
4. You see; the Canaanite people were a wicked, wild, and wanton bunch. They served a multitude of false gods, and practiced all sorts of grotesque and immoral rituals.
5. Abraham did not want his only son being introduced to their ways and influenced by their beliefs. He did not want Isaac to love the people of that land, or the practices of that land.

6. I ask you, parents; do you have a desire in your heart to protect your children from the evil influence of the world in which they live?
7. Or, are you quite willing to give your children away to the idols of this present world, and allow their hearts and minds to be poisoned by the gods of this age?
8. Too many parents are so concerned with raising successful children by this world's standards that they have neglected to raise faithful children by the Lord's standards.
9. I read about an elderly woman who once confronted and criticized a Hollywood actor for being a bad influence on young people.
10. The actor asked, "What makes you think so?" The woman said, "I should know. I've taken my grandson to see all of your movies!"
11. We have a responsibility to guard the hearts of our children from the love of this wicked world. Abraham's plan for Isaac's wife had to do with who Isaac would love. Furthermore, it involved:

A. Where Isaac would live

1. Abraham's servant asked a reasonable question. In verse 5, he asked if he should take Isaac back to Abraham's homeland, should the woman not be persuaded to come back with him to Canaan.
2. Abraham's answer was adamant. He said in verse 6, "...*Beware thou that thou bring not my son [there] again.*" In verse 8, he repeated the instructions, "...*only bring not my son [there] again.*"
3. While Abraham did not want Isaac marrying a girl from the land of Canaan, he likewise did not want Isaac going back to the land from which God had called him.
4. In this instruction, Abraham demonstrated his concern for the future of Isaac. He believed that God was going to give that land to his descendents, and he wanted Isaac to stay in the place of God's blessings and promise.
5. As parents, it should also be the desire of our hearts to keep our children in the center of God's will and the place of His promised blessings.
6. That starts by keeping them in church! It is within the community of God's assembled people that the Lord can and will work in the life of young people.

7. There are no spiritual blessings for them to inherit on the ball field. They won't get any closer to Jesus by sleeping in on Sunday and laying out on Wednesday.

8. While you cannot always control the lives of your kids, you should do as much as possible to keep them from the sinful influence of this world and under the saving influence of God's Word!

9. Abraham's plan for the wife of Isaac challenges us as parents. Before our time is up, let us strive "bring up our children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord".

10. Looking further in this story, we see here not only *the plan for the wife of a son*, but we see also secondly:

II. THE PROVIDENCE IN THE WORK OF A SERVANT

1. One of the primary characters in this story is the anonymous servant of Abraham. Many believe that this servant was Eliezer of Damascus, whom Abraham mentioned back in Genesis 15:2.

2. Whoever he was, he accepted the charge from Abraham, and the Bible says in verse 10 that, "*..the servant took ten camels of the camels of his master, and departed; for all the goods of his master were in his hand: and he arose, and went to Mesopotamia, unto the city of Nahor.*"

3. The success of this servant's work speaks to us once again of the providence of God, and how He sovereignly guides our steps when we put our trust in Him.

4. Consider the providence of God in the work of this servant. Notice first of all we see:

A. A request that sought the providence of God

1. Having traveled several hundred miles north and then east, the text tells us that eventually the servant and his caravan reached the well just outside the city of Haran.

2. Once there, the servant prayed for God's guidance over his task. His prayer is recorded for us beginning in verse 12. He prayed, "*O LORD God of my master Abraham, I pray thee, send me good speed this day, and shew kindness unto my master Abraham.*"

3. The prayer continues in verses 13 and 14. "*Behold, I stand here by the well of water; and the daughters of the men of the city come out to draw water: And let it come to pass, that the damsel to whom I shall say, Let down thy pitcher, I pray thee, that I may drink; and she shall say, Drink, and I will give thy camels drink*

also: let the same be she that thou hast appointed for thy servant Isaac; and thereby shall I know that thou hast shewed kindness unto my master.”

4. Obviously, that was a bold and ambitious prayer. He wanted God to leave him no doubt as to who he was looking for.

5. R. Kent Hughes says of this prayer, “Above all, the faithful servant placed himself in unbounded reliance upon God. Only God could effect such a providence.”ⁱⁱⁱ

6. This was a prayer that placed total trust and absolute faith in the ability of God to work things out and show the way.

7. Is this not how we are to live and pray as well? Proverbs 3:5-6 tells us to, *“Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.”*

8. The providence of God is something we should request in our lives, even as we rely upon it.

9. In this servant’s work we see not only a request that sought God’s providence, but we see also further:

B. A result that showed the providence of God

1. Look now at verse 15. I love this verse! It says, *“And it came to pass, before he had done speaking, that, behold, Rebekah came out...”*

2. Before the servant had even stopped praying, God had already led Rebekah out to the well. He had the answer on its way before the prayer was even finished!

3. Rebekah did just exactly as the servant had prayed. His prayer was answered clearly and undeniably by the providence of God.

4. In verses 26 and 27, the servant bowed down to thank God for what He had done. In verse 27, He gives a wonderful description of how providence works.

5. He said, *“...I being in the way, the LORD led me to the house of my master's brethren.”*

6. When we get in the way we are supposed to go, and do the things God has given us to do, we will find that He sovereignly and graciously guides us to where we are supposed to be.

7. On March 26, 1862, after hearing a sermon on the leadership of God from Psalm 23, Joseph Gilmore took out a pencil and the wrote these words:

*He leadeth me, O blessed thought!
O words with heavenly comfort fraught,
What ere I do, where I be,
Still 'tis God's hand that leadeth me!*

8. When we seek to do the Lord's will, we will find the Lord's way because of His providence over our lives!

9. Looking once more at this great chapter, we find here not only *the plan for the wife of a son*, and *the providence in the work of a servant*, but notice with me thirdly that we see:

III. THE PICTURE FROM THE WORDS OF A STORY

1. As I said, Genesis chapter 24 is really a love story. It is the record of the remarkable meeting of Isaac and Rebekah, and the beginning of their life together.

2. However, it is not just about Isaac and Rebekah. In the words of their story we are reminded of the greatest love story of all, the love of God in Jesus Christ, and the work of the gospel in the lives of people like us.

3. If we look with spiritual eyes at this chapter and this story, we are reminded of the work of salvation. Consider this wonderful picture that we see in the words of this text. First of all, we see here:

A. Salvation from a heavenly perspective

1. If we consider the basic characters in this story, we are reminded of the divine characters at work in the story of salvation.

2. The old preacher and writer, Griffith Thomas does a good job of pointing these out.^{iv} He writes of *the purpose of the father*. "The father has but one purpose in this chapter, to seek a bride for his son."

3. Right now, the Father in Heaven desires for the bride of Christ to be gathered from every kindred, tribe, and nation of the earth, and to one day be joined with Him at the marriage supper of the Lamb.

4. There is also here *the position of the son*. "The son is the father's one thought, and in him all his purposes are to be fulfilled." So also to Jesus Christ, the Son of God, have all things been committed and all things are headed for eternity.

5. In this story we also see *the proclamation of the servant*. Thomas says, “How wonderfully [the servant] proclaimed the vast resources of the father (v. 35), and the glory of the son (v. 36). In like manner the Holy Spirit...is continually proclaiming the glory of Christ.”^v

6. I hope you can see this! There is a Father in heaven who chose you before you chose Him. His only Son is the heir of all things, and has passed the test of death to prove His worthiness.

7. That Father has now sent His Holy Spirit to call you to Himself, to tell you how wonderful the Father’s house is, and how glorious the Father’s Son is.

8. That Spirit gives to you gifts as tokens of the Father’s goodness, and the righteous robes of the Son to prepare you for your journey to your new home!

9. That Spirit has been sent to go with you, guide you, and guard you all the way until you reach the place where you will be your Lord forever and ever!

10. *O, the love that drew salvation’s plan! O, the grace that brought it down to man!*

11. In the words of this story, we see a picture of salvation from a heavenly perspective. I would say furthermore, we see here a picture of:

B. Salvation from a human perspective

1. Consider Rebekah’s side of this story. One day she started out to the well just as she had so many days before.

2. There she met a stranger who told her of a rich and glorious Master, and of a son to whom all the blessings of the father have been given.

3. Her heart leapt at the grace of what she had heard! She realized that God had been good to her in calling her to this wonderful opportunity.

4. Yet, to go, she had to be willing to leave her old life behind and travel the long journey to marry a man she’d never even seen.

5. Look in our text in verse 58. It says, “*And they called Rebekah, and said unto her, Wilt thou go with this man? And she said, I will go.*”

6. Do you see something of your own story in Rebekah’s? We’ve never seen the Lord Jesus, but we have heard enough about Him and His Father’s house to know that we love Him and want to be with Him.

7. I Peter 1:18 says, *“Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.”*

8. Somewhere you believed the gospel that the Spirit revealed to your heart. You agreed to follow Him and now you are headed toward the Father’s house, and a glorious meeting with the Son!

9. Look now at how the story closes. Verse 63 says, *“And Isaac went out to meditate in the field at the eventide: and he lifted up his eyes, and saw, and, behold, the camels were coming.”*

10. Verse 64 says, *“And Rebekah lifted up her eyes, and when she saw Isaac, she lighted off the camel.”*

11. Verse 67 tells of how Isaac and Rebekah went back to His mother’s tent, they were married, and Isaac loved her.

12. Notice here that Rebekah and Isaac did not meet at her house, or even at his house. They met somewhere in between.

13. One day, those of us who make up the bride of Christ are going to be called out of this world, and we are going to meet the Lord in the air! What a meeting in air!

14. There is in this story a picture of the salvation journey of all those who come to know Jesus Christ by faith! May the Spirit give us eyes to see it and hearts to rejoice in it!

1. The match of Isaac and Rebekah is yet another story of the providence and guidance of God over the lives of His people.

2. Isaac was the promised Son, and from Him would come the promised seed.

3. All the promises of God to Abraham would find their fulfillment in the descendants that would come from the union of Isaac and Rebekah.

4. Most importantly, *the* ultimate Promised Son, the Lord Jesus would descend from this divinely ordered line.

5. Let us never lose sight in this opening book of the Bible that all of Scripture testifies of Jesus, and it is toward His birth, life, death, and resurrection that God was working, even in the days of Abraham.

6. Even in this international matchmaking story, God had Christ’s story *and* our story in mind. To Him be the glory forever and ever, Amen.

ⁱ Breton, Paul, “What percent of marriages today (2009/2010) originated from an online dating service?”, www.quora.com, accessed 11/3/11

ⁱⁱ Carson, Samuel T., The Brides of Genesis, (Biblical Books, Belfast, 2007), p. 61

ⁱⁱⁱ Hughes, R. Kent, Genesis: Beginning and Blessing, (Crossway Books, Wheaton, IL, 2004), p. 318

^{iv} Thomas, W.H. Griffith, Genesis I-XXV, (The Religious Tract Society, London, 1907), p. 289-290

^v Ibid