

22. A marriage made in heaven

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I've seen many beautiful brides-to-be running around and preparing many things for their wedding ceremonies with tremendous effort, time and money. Meanwhile, the grooms-to-be are thinking, "Why all this fuss? Why spend all this money for a few hour ceremony and reception? With that kind money we can get 61" Plasma TV with a High Definition NFL season subscription from ESPN, the NASCAR broadcasting with surround sound and a stainless steel BBQ grill from Home Depot."

Guys, you may think that way, but never, never express what you're thinking to your wife-to-be unless you want to spend your honeymoon on your hotel lobby all alone.

In chapter 21, we have studied and learned that there were many similarities in the birth of Isaac a son of Abraham and the birth of Jesus our Lord. In chapter 22, we also studied that there also were similarities in the sacrifice of Isaac and the atoning sacrifice of Jesus on the cross.

Now we are going to witness the process of finding a bride for Isaac. Here again, we will find another set of similarities between the marriage of Isaac and Rebekah and the marriage of the church of Jesus Christ and Christ Himself.

A. AN OATH TO FIND A BRIDE FOR ISAAC

Genesis 24:1-9 Now Abraham was old, well advanced in age; and the Lord had blessed Abraham in all things. 2 So Abraham said to the oldest servant of his house, who ruled over all that he had, "Please, put your hand under my thigh, 3 and I will make you swear by the Lord, the God of heaven and the God of the earth, that (1) you will not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell; 4 but you shall go to my country and to my family, and take a wife for my son Isaac." 5 And 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?" 6 But Abraham said to him, "Beware that you do not take my son back there. 7 The Lord God of heaven, who took me from my father's house and from the land of my family, and who spoke to me and swore to me, saying, 'To your descendants I give this land,' He will send His angel before you, and you shall take a wife for my son from there. 8 And if the woman is not willing to follow you, then you will be released from this oath; only do not take my son back there." 9 So the servant put his hand under the thigh of Abraham his master, and swore to him concerning this matter.

Abraham was now 140 years old. His great concern was that, before he died, he would find a wife for his only son Isaac. By doing so, God fulfill His covenant promises to bless Abraham with many descendants and give them Canaan for their inheritance. In those days, the parents made the marriage arrangements.

This is a very wonderful love story. It reveals that God is interested in our marriage. I am sure that you've noticed the first miracle Jesus performed during His ministry on the earth was at the wedding reception.

There are two institutions that God has given to the human family: one is marriage, and the other is human government. When these are broken, a society will fall apart. The family is the backbone of any society – God knew that – and He established marriage.

Abraham was a man of faith who believed God's word and knew how to apply it to specific situations and decisions. He sought to obey God's word because true faith always results in obedience. The more we meditate on God's Word, the more truth we will see in it and the more direction we will get from it. This applies to decisions about marriage, vocation, ministry or any other area in life. Unless we trust God's Word and obey it, He will not direct us.

Before we go any further, we must ask ourselves the reason for Abraham's condition of the bride-to-be. Why did he insist that the bride should not be from Canaan? Because Abraham knew that the Canaanites worship idols instead of the one true God. He didn't want his son Isaac to be influenced by idolatry of his wife-to-be.

The same principle applies to us in this 21st century:

2Co 6:14 Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?

The instruction from our God through Apostle Paul is extremely clear. Do not marry, do not date non-believers. Because if you do, you will fall into a trap of deserting God for the sake of the worldliness of your date or future spouse.

1) Father sent out the helper for the son's bride

Many Bible scholars believed that this servant was Eliezer who was mentioned in Gen 15. If it was someone else, the Holy Spirit didn't want us to know it.

In Hebrew word, 'Eliezer' means 'God is help' or 'helper'. Isn't it interesting that Jesus told us about the 'Helper' the Holy Spirit He was going to send on behalf of Him once He leaves the earth?

John 14:16-17 And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever-- 17 the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you.

Just as God the Father dispatched the Holy Spirit to bring the people to Christ, Abraham is dispatching Eliezer the helper to bring the bride to his son Isaac.

B. ELIEZER'S PRAYER FOR ISAAC'S BRIDE-TO-BE

Genesis 24:10-14 Then 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. 11 And he 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. 12 Then he said, "O Lord God of my master Abraham, please give me success this day, and show kindness to my master Abraham. 13 Behold, here I stand by the well of water, and the daughters of the men of the city are coming out to draw water. 14 Now 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."

Essentially, Eliezer asks God to guide through providential circumstances, which is not always a bad way to discern God's will. We often hear a phrase "Putting out a fleece" from what Gideon did in Judges 6 for this kind of method.

However, generally speaking, depending on the circumstances alone can be a dangerous way to discern God's will. We have a way of ignoring circumstances when it speaks against what we want or focusing on the circumstances that speak for what we want.

But in this case, Eliezer establishes what he will look for before anything happens. He isn't making up the rules as he goes along. Actually, there is a sense in which Eliezer "stacked the deck" against finding someone. It would take a remarkable woman to volunteer for the task of giving water to ten camels. Because considering that a camel may drink up to 20 gallons, watering them meant at least an hour of hard work.

The best way to find out God's will is through His Word the Bible or godly counsels from godly people around us, or stepping out in faith after a lots of prayers. After that we need to open our hearts to receive God's guidance whether we like His choice or not.

C. HERE COMES MISS REBEKAH

Genesis 24:15-27 And it happened, before he had finished speaking, that behold, Rebekah, who was born to Bethuel, son of Milcah, the wife of Nahor, Abraham's brother, came out with her pitcher on her shoulder. 16 Now the young woman was very beautiful to behold, a virgin; no man had known her. And she went down to the well, filled her pitcher, and came up. 17 And the servant ran to meet her and said, "Please let me drink a little water from your pitcher." 18 So she said, "Drink, my lord." Then she quickly let her pitcher down to her hand, and gave him a drink. 19 And when she had finished giving him a drink, she said, "I will draw water for your camels also, until they have finished drinking." 20 Then she quickly emptied her pitcher into the trough, ran back to the well to draw water, and drew for all his camels. 21 And the man, wondering at her, remained silent so as to know whether the Lord had made his journey prosperous or not. 22 So it was, when the camels had finished drinking, that 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 Moreover she said to him, "We have both straw and feed enough, and room to lodge." 26 Then the man bowed down his head and worshiped the Lord. 27 And he said, "Blessed be the Lord God of my master Abraham, 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."

Yes, sometimes God answers our prayer before we even finish it. Or sometimes He doesn't answer it for a long, long time.

In following the Lord Jesus, we must be led by the Spirit of Living God, not driven by our own selfish impulse or ambition.

Rebekah must had been a drop dead gorgeous woman like my wife Karen.

As Rebekah began the hard work of watering all the camels, the servant did not stop her. He wanted a woman who would not only say she would water the camels, but who would actually do it.

Ever since I became a born-again Christian, I had and still have a privilege to work with many dedicated servants of God in our church, across America and around the world. At the same time, I find many Christians who talk about serving God with their mouths, but never do anything. I really feel sorry for them. Because they missed out great blessings for not serving and committing a sin of lying.

So, if you want to serve God, do it without any lip service. If you want to miss out His blessings, don't serve Him.

D. THE REASON WHY I AM HERE

Genesis 24:28-49 So the young woman ran and told her mother's household these things. 29 Now Rebekah had a brother whose name was Laban, and Laban ran out to the man by the well. 30 So 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, saying, "Thus the man spoke to me," that he went to the man. And there he stood by the camels at the well. 31 And he said, "Come in, O blessed of the Lord! Why do you stand outside? For I have prepared the house, and a place for the camels." 32 Then the man came to the house. And 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. 33 Food was set before him to eat, but he said, "I will not eat until I have told about my errand." And he said, "Speak on." 34 So he said, "(2) I am Abraham's servant. 35 The Lord has blessed my master greatly, and he has become great; and He has given him flocks and herds, silver and gold, male and female servants, and camels and donkeys. 36 And Sarah my master's wife bore a son to my master when she was old; and to him he has given all that he has. 37 Now 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 dwell; 38 but you shall go to my father's house and to my family, and take a wife for my son.'

2) The witness of the Servant

Please note that the servant was not bragging about his position in Abraham's household like, "Oh yeah, I am the chief operating officer of Joe Millionaire Foundation. He was telling this Rebekah's family about his master Abraham and his son Isaac, not about himself.

Just like that, the Holy Spirit never speak of Himself, but He always points us to the cross to exalt God the Son Jesus Christ.

The servant gave tokens of his master's wealth just as the Spirit gives us the "first-fruits" and "down payment" of our spiritual riches in Christ. The best is yet to come!

The servant's job was not to argue or bribe but simply to bear witness to the greatness of his master. He did not force Rebekah to marry Isaac, but he merely gave her the facts and the opportunity to make a decision. While there is nothing wrong with urging people to be saved, we must be careful not to try to take the place of the Spirit who alone can do the work of conviction in the human heart.

Laban's character is revealed in here. He was more excited about the expensive gifts than the privilege of showing hospitality to a stranger. Isaac and Rebekah's son Jacob would discover years later what a clever con-man Laban really was.

E. A COMPLETE AND QUICK RESPONSE FROM REBEKAH

Genesis 24:50-60 Then Laban and Bethuel answered and said, "The thing comes from the Lord; we cannot speak to you either bad or good. 51 Here is Rebekah before you; take her and go, and let her be your master's son's wife, as the Lord has spoken." 52 And it came to pass, when Abraham's servant heard their words, that he worshiped the Lord, bowing himself to the earth. 53 Then 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. 54 And 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." 55 But her brother and her mother said, "Let the young woman stay with us a few days, at least ten; after that she may go." 56 And he said to them, "Do not hinder me, since the Lord has prospered my way; send me away so that I may go to my master." 57 So they said, "We will call the young woman and ask her personally." 58 Then they called Rebekah and said to her, "Will you go with this man?" And she said, "(3) I will go." 59 So they sent away Rebekah their sister and her nurse, and Abraham's servant and his men. 60 And 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."

3) The response of the bride-to-be

Just as the servant would not delay in presenting his petition earlier, so he would not delay in completing his mission.

When the servant asked that they let Rebekah make the choice, and her reply was, "I will go." This is the decision every sinner must make.

What motivated Rebekah to make the right decision? She heard the word about Isaac and believed it. She saw the proof of his greatness, generosity and wealth and wanted to be with him for the rest of her life. She had never seen Isaac, but what she had heard about him convinced her to go to Canaan with the servant.

It is a decision of faith, based on the evidence provided by the Holy Spirit through the Word and the witness of the church. The sinner who delays is in danger of losing the opportunity to belong to God's family and live in heaven.

Hebrews 3:7-8a Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says: "Today, if you will hear His voice, 8 Do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion.

2 Cor 6:2 For He says: "In an acceptable time I have heard you, And in the day of salvation I have helped you. Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation."

F. A MARRIAGE MADE IN HEAVEN

Genesis 24:61-67 (4) Then Rebekah and her maids arose, and they rode on the camels and followed the man. So the servant took Rebekah and departed. 62 Now Isaac came from the way of Beer Lahai Roi, for he dwelt in the South. 63 And (5) Isaac went out to meditate in the field in the evening; and he lifted his eyes and looked, and there, the camels were coming. 64 Then Rebekah lifted her eyes, and when she saw Isaac she dismounted from her camel; 65 for she had said to the servant, "Who is this man walking in the field to meet us?" The servant said, "It is my master." So she took a veil and covered herself. 66 (6) And the servant told Isaac all the things that he had done. 67 Then Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent; and he took Rebekah and (7) she became his wife, and he loved her. So Isaac was comforted after his mother's death.

4) Trusting her groom without seeing him

We can only imagine the conversations Rebekah and Eliezer would have on the journey. She would want to know all she could about Isaac, whom she loved without ever seeing, and he would be delighted to tell her. We choose to love our Savior and Lord Jesus without seeing Him because He loved us first.

The covering with a veil signified chastity, modesty and submission. This is how Rebekah wants to meet her bridegroom.

5) The groom had a ministry of prayer while the bride came

Please note that Isaac was meditating and praying while Rebekah was on her way to him. Just like that, our Savior Lord Jesus Christ is interceding our prayers while He awaits for the Father's word to come and get His bride the church.

6) The servant successfully fulfilled his duty to bring the bride to the groom

The Holy Spirit has sealed us and will deliver us to Christ at the day of redemption.

7) The bride becomes his wife and the groom loves her

Rebekah had received a few gifts from Isaac. But now that she was his very own, she possessed everything that he possessed. Their lives were one, and so it is with Christ and His church as joint-heir in the Lord.

G. APPLICATIONS

1) The more we meditate on God's Word, the more truth we will see in it and the more direction we will get from it.

2) In following the Lord Jesus, we must be led by the Spirit of the Living God, not driven by our own selfish impulse or ambition.

3) It is a decision of faith, based on the evidence provided by the Holy Spirit through the Word and the witness of the church. The sinner who delays is in danger of losing the opportunity to belong to God's family and live in heaven.