

BOB HALLMAN - THE EPIC LIFE

“The Search For A Bride”

Genesis 24:1-67

2003

Introduction

An average of 13,500 Americans get married every day. And roughly 50% of those marriages will end in divorce! I wouldn't describe those as very good odds. Can you imagine getting on a plane with those kind of odds? Or getting in the ocean if you knew you had a 50% chance of being eaten by JAWS?

But it shouldn't come as a surprise to us considering that most marriages are the result of meeting people:

In bars

In Internet chatrooms

Through dating services

Or by marketing yourself on EBay to the highest bidder!

Personally, I think the divorce rate could be substantially reduced if we went back to the days of arranged marriages as recorded for us in Genesis 24.

But my young son Michael has decided to eliminate possibility of marital failure – he's going to marry his mom!

Genesis 24, the longest in the book of Genesis, presents us with the delightful story of Abraham sending his servant to find a wife for his son. This is more than just a story of "boy meets girl." It is a wonderful foreshadowing of the redemptive work of God.

I Abraham's Final Years

A. He was **old** and well advanced in years [Verse 1a]

Sarah had been dead three years, and Abraham was now 140 years old.

B. He was **blessed** by the Lord in every way [Verse 1b]

Gen 12:2-3 “I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.”

II Abraham's Final Request

Abraham began to make preparations for his death. And high on his “To Do List” was finding a godly wife for his son, Isaac. And so he sent for his chief servant, Eliezer whose name means, “God of help” or “helper” (Gen 15:2), and made a very important request.

A. He asked his chief servant to swear:

1. To **not** get a wife for Isaac from the Canaanites [Verse 2-3]
Deut 7:3-5 “Do not intermarry with them. Do not give your daughters to their sons or take their daughters for your sons, for they will turn your sons away from following me to serve other gods, and the LORD's anger will burn against you and will quickly destroy you.”
- 2 Cor 6:14-15 “Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? What harmony is there between Christ and Belial? What does a believer have in common with an unbeliever?”

Application:

I don't know why Christians think they will find a godly spouse in a singles bar or at a worldly party. If a man or woman wants to find a godly spouse, they need to look where godly Christians should be. And if a person wants a godly spouse, he or she needs to be the kind of person a godly spouse would be looking for.

2. To get a wife for Isaac from his relatives [Verse 4-5]
3. To **not** take Isaac back to Ur [Verse 6]
Gen 12:1 “The LORD had said to Abram, "Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you.”
Luke 9:62 “Jesus replied, "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God.”
- B. He believed the angel of the Lord would give **success** [Verse 7]
 1. If the woman refused, he would be released from the oath [Verse 8-9]
2 Cor 2:15-16 “For we are to God the aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing. To the one we are the smell of death; to the other, the fragrance of life.”

III Abraham's Servant's Mission

- A. He **left** for Aram Naharaim [Verse 10]
'Aram Naharayim = “Mesopotamia” [Modern-day Iraq]
This was a significant journey of approximately 500 miles.
- B. He rested near the well in Nahor [Verse 11]
Nahor was the brother of Abraham

Now what this servant did next was HUGE!

Illustration:

A younger servant would probably have gone about this task in a very different manner. I can imagine him coming into town, advertising the fact that he worked for a very wealthy foreigner with a handsome, eligible son who was to be his only heir. His intention to find a bride would have been

publicized, and only one lucky girl was to be chosen. To select such a bride the servant might have held a “Miss Mesopotamia” contest. Only those who were the most beautiful and talented would be allowed to enter, and the winner would become the wife of Isaac.

But that’s not what this godly servant did. Instead, when his small caravan arrived in Nahor he immediately went to prayer!

Prov 3:5-6 “Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.”

C. He **prayed** to the Lord: [Verse 12]

1. “Give me success today”

Neh 1:11 “O Lord, let your ear be attentive to the prayer of this your servant and to the prayer of your servants who delight in revering your name. Give your servant success today by granting him favor in the presence of this man.”

Prov 16:3 “Commit to the LORD whatever you do, and your plans will succeed.”

2. “Show kindness to my master Abraham”

D. He proposed a test of character [Verse 13-14]

He knew some of the qualities Isaac’s bride should have:

1. She must be from Abraham’s people
2. She should be attractive to Isaac
3. She must be a godly and virtuous woman

But what if there were several women who fit these qualifications?

So he proposed a test of character – a test that would set this particular woman apart from all the rest -- a test that would reveal the depth of her character.

Camel Information:

Now culturally, it was a normal act of hospitality to provide water to thirsty travelers. But the idea that a woman would also provide water for 10 thirsty camels, was going far beyond what would normally be expected. Keep in mind that camels can consume an enormous amount of water -- as many as 35 gallons of water in less than six minutes. And to water 10 thirsty camels from a well would have taken at least an hour of hard work. So in praying this prayer, Eliezer was "stacking the deck" against finding someone. It would take a remarkable woman to volunteer for this lowly and backbreaking task.

E. **Before** he had finished praying:

Is 65:24 “Before they call I will answer while they are still speaking I will hear.”

Illustration:

“While Samuel was sacrificing ...” 1 Sam 7:10

“As they began to sing ...” 2 Chron 20:22

1. Rebekah came out [Verse 15-16]

a. She was the daughter of Milcah – a 2nd cousin of Isaac **CHECK!**

b. She was very beautiful **CHECK!**

Her appearance isn't the primary basis of the servant's choice, but it is interesting to note that in addition to her industrious nature, God chose a wife that would also be attractive to Isaac.

c. She was a virgin **CHECK!**

2 Cor 11:2-3 “I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy. I promised you to one husband, to Christ, so that I might present you as a pure virgin to him.”

2. Rebekah demonstrated a **servant's** heart [Verse 17-20]

She was about to become an integral part of God's eternal plan of salvation by marrying Isaac. But, of course, she had no knowledge of these things at the time. She served simply because it was the pattern of her life.

Application: I wonder how many of us desire to be used of the Lord in great ways, but have not proven reliable in the small things in life?

Matt 25:21 “His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant!

You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things.”

F. He **watched** closely for God's answer to his prayer [Verse 21-24]

Watched closely = Sha'ah = “To whirl with giddiness, be stunned or astonished”

As he watched in amazement, he knew that this girl was “the one.”

Application:

One of the greatest joys I have as a believer is to simply observe the power and works of God and to give Him praise for what He has done.

Ps 115:1 “Not to us, O LORD, not to us but to your name be the glory, because of your love and faithfulness.”

1. He gave her a gold ring and two bracelets

Ezek 16:9-14 “I clothed you with an embroidered dress and put leather sandals on you. I dressed you in fine linen and covered you with costly garments. I adorned you with jewelry: I put bracelets on your arms and a necklace around your neck, and I put a ring on your nose, earrings on your ears and a beautiful crown on your head ... And your fame spread among the nations on account of your beauty, because the splendor I had given you made your beauty perfect, declares the Sovereign LORD.”

2. She demonstrated **hospitality** [Verse 25]
 - 1 Peter 4:9 “Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling.”
 - Heb 13:1-3 “Keep on loving each other as brothers. Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it.”

- G. He bowed down and worshiped the Lord [Verse 26-27]

Shachah = “To prostrate oneself in reverence”

2 Chron 20:18-19 “Jehoshaphat bowed with his face to the ground, and all the people of Judah and Jerusalem fell down in worship before the LORD.”

1. He praised the Lord for His **answer**

Ps 105:1-3 “Give thanks to the LORD, call on his name; make known among the nations what he has done. Sing to him, sing praise to him; tell of all his wonderful acts. Glory in his holy name; let the hearts of those who seek the LORD rejoice.”

VI The Response Of Rebekah’s Family

- A. Rebekah ran and **told** her mother’s household [Verse 28]

The servant tells Rebekah’s family all about Abraham, about all his wealth -- flocks, herds, silver and gold, servants, camels and donkeys. Why? Because all this would one day be Isaac’s inheritance that Rebekah would also enjoy! Then he tells of how God led him along the way, blessing his journey and answering his remarkable prayer. He ends by presenting to her the gifts Isaac had sent along, the sample of the riches he was offering to her.

Application:

The spiritual parallels for us as believers are fairly obvious. But it is interesting to note that the servant says nothing of himself, only of his master and his master’s son, Isaac.

John 16:13-15 “But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you.”

- B. Laban acknowledged the servant's story by saying: [Verse 29-33]
 1. This is from the **Lord** [Verse 50a]

Prov 21:30 “There is no wisdom, no insight, no plan that can succeed against the LORD.”
 2. We can say nothing to you one way or the other [Verse 50b]

Gen 31:24 “Then God came to Laban the Aramean in a dream at night and said to him, “Be careful not to say anything to Jacob, either good or bad.”

3. Let Rebekah become the wife of your master's son [Verse 51]

a. As the Lord has directed

This invitation to marriage is not an easy choice that she is asked to make. She is being asked to leave her family and everything familiar and to go with a man whom she has just met a day or two before, and to marry another man who she has never seen before.

Ps 45:10-11 "Listen, O daughter, consider and give ear: Forget your people and your father's house. The king is enthralled by your beauty; honor him, for he is your lord."

Application:

The Holy Spirit called us to love someone we had never seen, and we responded by committing ourselves to be united with the Son of our Heavenly Father. And now we are on a rather long journey to meet him at last in His Father's house.

1 Peter 1:8-9 "Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls."

C. The family received gifts from the servant [Verse 53]

When an agreement of marriage had been made, it was customary for the bridegroom (or his representative) to give the family of the bride gifts as a dowry to demonstrate his financial ability to provide for the bride.

D. The family blessed Rebekah [Verse 54-61]

But in the morning when the servant expressed his desire to be on his way back to his master, Rebekah's mother and brother were hesitant to let her go.

"If the world does not succeed in persuading the believer to abide in the world, it will seek to delay his exit . . . When you decide to go with the Lord, the world will applaud your devotion but will say, 'Don't rush. Abide a few days, at least ten, and then go.'" (Barnhouse)

Matt 19:28-30 "And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life."

We have no record of the conversation during the long trip home. But there can't be much doubt that it was focused on person, character and nature of Isaac. Undoubtedly, Rebekah wanted to know everything there was to know about Isaac, about his father, about God's plan for them.

Application:

This conversation and hunger for information about her soon-to-be husband is a picture of the believer's walk with the Lord that is so beautifully facilitated by the Holy Spirit who teaches all things about the Father and the Son. He comes along side of the church as we make our long journey

to meet the Groom. The Holy Spirit sees us through this journey until He finally presents us to Christ as His beautiful bride.

V The Response Of Isaac

This is the first mention of Isaac since he was left on top of Mount Moriah where Abraham was called by the Lord to offer him up on the alter of sacrifice (Gen 22:19). We see nothing of Isaac from the time of his "resurrection" to the time he is united with his bride -- a remarkable picture of the coming together of Jesus Christ and the church. (1 Thess 4:16-17)

A. He was **meditating** in a field

Isaac was a godly man who was in the habit of meditating on God's Word.

Ps 1:2-3 "But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers."

And as Christ lives to intercede for His Bride, the church (Rom 8:34; Heb 7:25), we find Isaac interceding for his bride until her safe arrival.

B. He listened to the servant's account [Verse 62-66]

C. He married Rebekah [Verse 67]

1. He **loved** her

Eph 5:25 "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church ..."

Do you notice that love came last, not first, in this chapter? Isaac learned to love his wife in time. Love came after marriage, not before it.

Application:

"Romantic love is never the basis for marriage.
Instead, marriage is the basis for romantic love."

2. He was **comforted** by her

Prov 18:22 "He who finds a wife finds what is good and receives favor from the LORD."

Prov 19:14 "Houses and wealth are inherited from parents, but a prudent wife is from the LORD."

Application:

At this point, the servant seems to disappear into the background which reminds me of the words of John the Baptist:

John 3:29-30 "The bride belongs to the bridegroom. The friend who attends the bridegroom waits and listens for him, and is full of joy when he hears the bridegroom's voice. That joy is mine, and it is now complete. He must become greater; I must become less."

Conclusion

Here are several closing thoughts:

1. If you are looking for a spouse:
 - a. Ask God for his choice for you.
 - b. Look for your potential spouse where a godly person would be.
 - c. Be the kind of person that would attract a godly spouse.

2. If you are already married:
 - a. The odds of having a lasting marriage in our culture are dismal, unless you are willing to follow God's Blueprint for a successful marriage, you can be assured of a terrific marriage. [I recommend the reading of Eph 5].

3. If you are looking for the spiritual significance of this chapter:
 - a. It is a beautiful picture of the work of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit in the work of redemption!

A father, desiring a bride for his son (who has been "dead" and "raised from the dead") sends His servant whose name is *Eliezer* (which means "God of help" or "helper"), to get a bride for His son. The beautiful bride is divinely met, chosen, and called, and then lavished with gifts. She is then entrusted to the servant who reveals everything to her about her master's son as he guides her to his Master's home where she will finally meet and be united with her bridegroom.

Rev 19:7 "Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready."

You are that Bride! Are you ready for to meet your Master's Son?

1. If you have never accepted God's invitation to become a part of His family:
 - a. Repent of your sin

Repent = Metanoeo = "To think differently and to change course."
 Romans 3:23 "... all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."
 Romans 6:23 "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."
 Acts 3:19 "Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord ..."
 - b. Reconcile with God

Reconcile = Apokatallasso = "To put right a broken relationship"
 1 Peter 3:18 "For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God."
 - c. Realign your heart to God (your loyalties and allegiance)

2 Cor 5:15 "And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again."

Application:

1. Abraham represents the father heart of God in search of a bride for his Son
2. The servant represents the ministry and work of the Holy Spirit in wooing and drawing the bride.
We are like Abraham's servant:
 - a. We are sent to find a bride for our Master's Son
 - b. We are responsible to speak, but not for the outcome
3. Isaac represents the life and purposes of Christ:
 - a. He was promised long before his coming – Lk 1:70
 - b. He finally appeared at the appointed time – Gal 4:4
 - c. He was conceived and born miraculously – Lk 1:35
 - d. He was given his name by God even before his birth – Matt 1:21
 - e. He was offered up in sacrifice by his father – 1 Jn 2:2
 - f. He was obedient to the point of death – Phil 2:8
 - g. He was brought back from the dead – Eph 1:19-23
 - h. He waiting for his union with His Bride
 - i. In the meantime, he is preparing a place – Jn 14:3
4. Rebekah is a type of the church:
 - a. She is the pure Bride – 2 Cor 11:2
 - b. She is preparing to meet her heavenly Bride Groom – Jn 3:29; Rom 7:4
 - c. Her marriage to the Groom was planned long before she knew about it – Eph 1:3-4
 - d. She was necessary for the accomplishment and the glory of the son – Eph 1:23
 - e. She was to share in the glory of the son – Jn 17:22-23
 - f. She learned of the son through his emissary –
 - g. She immediately left all to go to the son and she offered herself to the son even before she saw him – 1 Pet 1:8
 - h. She journeyed through the wilderness to meet him guided by the servant – 1 Pet 1:3-9
 - i. She was loved by, and finally united forever to the son – Eph 5:26-27; Rev 19:7; 1 Thess 4:17

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