



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Genesis 24: 34-49

“A Bride For Isaac”

TRANSCRIPT

The chapter for today is the longest chapter in the Book of Genesis. The chapter of 67 verses as you already know I am sure, and I would like to vary the methodology just a little bit this morning and when we come to the message, I want to read through most of the chapter and just make some comments and conclude with one or two more important lessons. So for the Scripture reading, I would like to turn to verse 34 and read through verse 49 for our Scripture reading. This is the testimony of the servant and it is a testimony to Abraham and to Isaac in the context, and I think it's an important feature of the message that follows, and so we will just use this as the Scripture reading for today. So let's turn to Genesis chapter 24 and verse 34 where the servant, the unnamed servant, begins to give his testimony concerning Abraham and Isaac to Rebekah and the members of her family.

“So he said, ‘I am Abraham's servant and the 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. Now Sarah, my master's wife, bore a son to my master in her old age, and he has given him all that he has. And 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 live; but you shall go to my father's house and to my relatives, and take a wife for my son.' And I said to my master, 'Suppose

the woman does not follow me.' And he 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; then 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.' So I came today to the spring, and said, 'O Lord, the God of my master Abraham, if now thou will make my journey on which I go successful; behold, 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'; and 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.' '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.' And she 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. Then 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. And I bowed low and worshiped the Lord, and blessed the Lord, the God of my master Abraham, who has guided me in the right way to take the daughter of my master's kinsman for his son. So now if you are going to deal kindly and truly with my master, tell me; and if not, let me know, that I may turn to the right hand or the left."

May the Lord bless this reading from his word.

Genesis chapter 24 is “A Bride for Isaac.” It is the longest chapter in the Book of Genesis and it tells perhaps the greatest love story in the Bible that is among mere humans, so engaging is Genesis chapter 24 that it has thrilled and charmed readers for ages. It's a story of true love. Someone has said it takes two to make a marriage, a single daughter and an anxious mother. In this case, it is a single son and an anxious father, but it is true love, and true love is very important.

Did you hear the heartwarming story of the boy who was born on the East Side of New York of poverty-stricken immigrant parents? He grew up, married a neighborhood girl. They began

to have a family. He struggled for some years, but all of a sudden everything changed. He became very wealthy. He owned steel mills, oil refineries and some railroads, and he had a home in Miami, a villa on the Riviera and an estate in Rome, but he never forgot his true love and so every year, he went back to Lower East Side just to visit his wife and children. [Laughter]

I also heard of a very ardent golfer. Golfers are strange, and this one was on a putting green, and a woman came running up the fairway in her wedding gown with the wedding gown flying in the breeze and she blurted out to him, “How could you do this to me?” And he said, “Listen, I told you only if it rained.” [Laughter]

You know, coming to the Book of Genesis, [Johnson laughs] this 24th chapter is known as the great love story of the Bible, but really the greatest message of Genesis, chapter 24 lies elsewhere for at its heart, it is the supreme importance of doing the will of God that Moses stresses in his telling of the story. This is a true marriage made in heaven and it is significant for the contributions that it makes in several areas.

It is an example of a person seeking and finding the will of God, for example, and I think it reminds us of Proverbs chapter 3, verses 5 and 6, “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.” That’s one of the greatest lessons that emerges from the story of Genesis 24. Another thing that it teaches that is important and could be the subject of at least one, perhaps more messages, is that it teaches that the chief ingredient in the ideal marriage is godliness.

You can see that the thing that dominated Abraham and the thing that dominated the servant was the will of God in the light of the promises that had been given to Abraham, and so Abraham and the servant and Isaac, and I think we can even gather from the tone of the narrative that this was true of Rebekah, that the thing that meant more to them than anything else was the will of God. And even Laban, who later on does not appear in the greatest of light in the Book of Genesis, is one who is willing to acknowledge after the story is told him that the matter comes from the Lord.

Godliness in marriage, that really, is the chief ingredient in an ideal marriage. And a marriage that does not have at its foundation, godliness will have a much rougher time of success. I think, however that probably the lesson that is most familiar to us who have read the Book of Genesis very much is the illustration that this story affords of the father’s obtaining of a bride for his son through the Spirit in the present age, for the story of how Abraham used the unnamed servant, and remember the Holy Spirit is not really the name of the third person of the Trinity. But the story of how Abraham uses the unnamed servant to obtain a bride for his son Isaac has down through the centuries reminded the Christian church of how the first person of the Trinity, our Heavenly Father, has used the Holy Spirit to obtain a bride for the second person of the Trinity, the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Apostle Paul says, in 2 Corinthians chapter 11, that he has espoused the church of Jesus Christ to the Lord Jesus, that he might present us to him as a pure virgin. And then James standing up in the Jerusalem Council said, “That the thing that God is doing in the present age is visiting the Gentiles to take out of them a people for his name.” So here is a beautiful illustration in the form of a love story of the father’s obtaining of a bride, the bride of Christ, the church, for his son the Lord Jesus through the Spirit.

Let me remind you of the scene. Abraham has been in the land now for a number of years. He is 140 years of age now and so this is about 65 years after he made his way into the land of Canaan. By turning back in your mind to Genesis, chapter 11, you will remember that he left part of his family that had come from the Ur of the Chaldees in the city of Nahor or the city of Haran. Thereafter Terah had died. He came into the land, but there was a little family that had been left there and through the years, the relatives had been growing there.

There was a passage that I skipped. Someone came up to me and asked me why did I skip it. It's the passage in Genesis, chapter 22, verse 20 through 24 and I am going to read it right now because it is important for understanding Genesis chapter 24. “Now it came about after these things,” that is after the offering up of Isaac, “that it was told Abraham saying, ‘Behold, Milcah.’” Notice it was told Abraham, so news had reached him of his own family in Haran, the city of Nahor.

“It was told Abraham saying, ‘Behold, Milcah also has borne children to your brother Nahor who did not come into the land with them.’”

Now I confess I’ve always had to smile a little bit at the names of these brothers Uz and Buz, that just does not... [laughter] they must be nicknames. “Uz, his first born and Buz, his brother and Kemuel, the father of Aram; and Chesed, then Hazo and Pildash and Jidlaph and Bethuel, and Bethuel became the father of Rebekah. These eight Milcah bore to Nahor, Abraham's brother.” So you can see that news had already come to Abraham that there was a part of his family that had come with him from Ur of the Chaldees who had some understanding of Yahweh, the God of Abraham, and so when we read in Genesis 24 that he sent the servant off to obtain a wife from members of his own relatives, it's not surprising that he should go to the city of Nahor to Haran and there look for a bride for Isaac, for many years had transpired and there were now a number of births and possibly some eligible maidens for a bride for Isaac.

Abraham is now 140 years of age and Isaac is about 40. Evidently Isaac had never heard that little ditty, “one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, marry your girl before it's too late. Do not reflect, do not delay or someone else will snatch her away.” He did not seem concerned and he is a man about 40 years of age and furthermore God has, remember, promised that it is through Isaac that the seed of Abraham should be called. So it's not surprising then that Abraham, now old and advanced in years, a hundred and forty years of age, should be concerned about the seed that God had promised.

We read now and I am going to just read through the sections skipping the one that I have read for the Scripture reading and make a few comments as we go along saving the last few minutes of the hour for stressing the example that we have here of Abraham obtaining a wife for his son Isaac as an illustration of what God is doing today. Verse 1: “Now Abraham was old, advanced in age and the Lord had blessed Abraham in every way.” This reference to Abraham's age reminds us of course that all of our time on this earth is really an interval to prepare us for our interment. It was time for the program of God to make progress, Abraham felt, and so there should be some

movement to the obtaining of the seed by which the promised great seed should come. He was old, advanced in age, and so Abraham said to his servant who incidentally is unnamed throughout this whole chapter.

It is possible that he is the Eliezer mentioned in Genesis chapter 15 and verse 2 and probably so, but nevertheless his name is not mentioned and that cannot help but be of some significance. It is an order that this chapter may be the kind of illustration that it is of the spiritual work of proving a bride for the Lord Jesus Christ. So Abraham calls his servant and says to him, he had charge of all that he owned. “Please place your hand under my thigh and I will make you swear by the Lord.” Notice the term “I will make you swear by Yahweh, 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, but you shall go to my country and to my relatives, and take a wife for my son Isaac.”

Now this oath is a rather interesting kind of oath. He wants to put his hand under his thigh, under his loins, and while there has been a great deal of discussion over this kind of oath and I am not sure that anyone knows precisely the kind that it was, it seemed to have been related to the generative organs of Abraham. In other words, he made this oath in the light of the promise of God that he would have a seed from his own body through whom all the families of the earth would be blessed. And so he makes this oath with reference to the coming seed and I think it's fair to say that it is also an expression of faith. It's an expression of faith that God is going to from his own loins bring forth a seed. This would have to be through Isaac now, a seed through whom ultimately the whole of the earth would be blessed. The early church fathers regarded this as an expression of faith on Abraham's part in the coming Redeemer and I think that that is the thing that we should see in it as well.

Now he says that the wife of Isaac should be not of the daughters of the Canaanites and this is another theme that is common throughout the whole of the Bible. Marriages are marriages made in heaven of course, but on earth, they should be marriages between those who are in the common

faith, and Abraham is very much interested in having Isaac marry someone who has the same faith that Isaac has, and so he is to go not to the daughters of the Canaanites.

He is not to allow Isaac to have such a bride, but rather he is to find a bride from his own country, from his own relatives in order that there may be a marriage truly in the Lord. And this idea through the Bible is picked up in the New Testament and the Apostle Paul makes statements in the 1 Corinthians, chapter 7 to the effect that when two people marry and one is a believer that marriage should only be in the Lord. How important that is! So many marriages are shipwrecked when they begin when someone who is a Christian marries a non-Christian because the principles by which we act and move and carry on our affairs are principles that are ultimately related to the truth of God.

And if we do not have those fundamental presuppositions together, then there cannot help but ultimately be conflict in the marriage. Conflicts arise even among believers, but how much more when the basic principles are not the same! So right here in the first book of the Bible, we have this biblical principle. Marriage is to be in the Lord. And a marriage in the Lord is the marriage that has the greatest hope of success.

And we read on beginning with the 5th verse. “And the servant said to him, ‘Suppose the woman will not be willing to follow me to this land; should I take your son back to the land from where you came?’ Then Abraham said to him, ‘Beware lest you do not take my son back there! The Lord, the God of heaven, who took me from my father's home 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. But if the woman is not willing to follow you, then you will be free from my oath; only do not take my son back there.’ So the servant placed his hand under the thigh of Abraham, his master, and swore to him concerning the matter.”

Now Abraham, it might seem is being a little strict. What's wrong in Isaac traveling back to Haran? Well Abraham evidently thought that if Isaac went back to Haran, the chances are rather strong that it would be difficult for him to come back in the land. And so consequently, he would

not go back and he would not permit Isaac to go back because God had called him out of the world of the Gentiles and now being in the land, it was there that he wanted to stay.

There is a great principle here too and it's an evidence of the fact that Abraham understood the weakness of the flesh. The Christian called out of the world should not go back into the world. And so Isaac is not to go there. The servant is to obtain the bride for him. Now he is to go to his relatives and, I say, Abraham is not casting around in the dark because he knows that information about how the family had been growing in Haran. It was reported to Abraham and so he had information about the fact that there were members of the family there and they also knew about the God Yahweh who had brought them out of Ur of the Chaldees. So that is the servant and the oath.

Now with verse 10 through verse 14, we look at the sign. Verse 10: “Then 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, which was Haran. Now the journey is skipped; that is, no details are given of the trip from the north down into the land. So evidently that is not important.

We pick up the reading again in verse 11, “And he 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. And he said, “O LORD,” (that is O Yahweh) “the God of my master Abraham, please grant me success today, and show lovingkindness to my master Abraham.” Now that’s important the word “lovingkindness.”

Notice the prayer is addressed to Yahweh, the covenant-keeping God. Furthermore, secondly, he says “show lovingkindness.” That’s the Hebrew word *chesed*. Now *chesed* is the word that speaks of covenant lovingkindness. It has often been translated “loyal love.” But it is lovingkindness by the God of the covenant, it's faithfulness to the covenant promises and so the servant is praying that God will remember his covenant promises and that he will be faithful to them because he had said “in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed,” in Abraham's seed. So it's the servant reminding the Lord of the word that he has spoken and asking him now to fulfill his own word.

This is not a general lovingkindness; this is a special covenant lovingkindness, faithfulness to the specific promises that Abraham had been given. “Behold, I am standing by the spring, and the daughters of the men of the city are coming out to draw water.” And he wants this little sign to be the means by which he will be able to identify the young maiden. “Now 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 thou hast appointed for thy servant Isaac; and by this I shall know that thou hast shown covenant, faithfulness to my master.”

Now we are inclined perhaps, being city dwellers or at least I am inclined being a city dweller almost all of my life, to not to understand exactly the sign that the servant has requested should be the identifying mark, but Rebekah was a child of the desert country and she knew as much about camels as a Texas farm girl knows about horses. Isn't it strange that women like horses so much better than men? I've never quite understood that, which of course means I am a man [laughter].

But anyway, camels are noted for the quantities of water that they can drink. A camel can easily put away 20 gallons of water. So to water ten camels is two hundred gallons. That is quite a few steps from the well and would mean at least an hour's work, solid work. In those days, the women worked. [Laughter] And they came out at a specific time in order to handle the water duties. And so this was quite a sign. So when he said, let me drink, and she added, let me water your camels, seeing ten of them there, she was really offering herself for about an hour's hard work. So it was a sign that was not simply an incidental kind of thing and one that would not ordinarily be fulfilled by accident or incidentally.

So, well one other thing before we move onto the next section. Will you notice what the servant says in verse 14, “may she be the one whom Thou hast appointed for Thy servant Isaac?” There is no free will here. It's the one whom Thou hast appointed. One of the marks of Christian growth in discernment and comprehension is the awareness that all things that happen are by divine appointment. Man thinks he has a free will. True. There are certain things that you can choose.

I did get up this morning, Believe it or not. I got up and I did choose to wear this particular tie. It was possible for me to wear another tie and so of my own free agency, I made this decision. I know of course I didn't make it of free will ultimately, but I don't remember any particular compulsion. Wear that dark blue tie with those stripes in it. So that was my decision. I can do other things. I can choose to eat a certain thing. For breakfast this morning, I chose, off of a menu, certain things. Well, it so happens it's the same thing I choose every Sunday morning [laughter], but nevertheless it was my choice. Now we do have the sense of having the power to make certain decisions, but when we talk about biblical free will, we are talking about something else. We are talking about the decision in spiritual matters and the decisions in spiritual matters, while we may think that we make them, they are things that are made for us ultimately by God. The Scriptures make that plain. Even our new birth is said to be not of blood, not of the will of the flesh, not of the will of man, but of God. “It is not of Him that willeth,” the Apostle Paul says, “nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy.”

Now I know there are many of you in the audience who would say, Dr. Johnson, you have told us that a hundred times or a hundred and three times. Well I am going to tell it a few more if the Lord enables me to stand up behind this pulpit a few more times because there are still some of us that do not seem to grasp the fact that, in spiritual things, we do not have ultimate free will. The salvation that we have is the salvation that is traceable entirely to God's initiative. “Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth” James says. So it is the divine will that is responsible for our salvation.

Now, when we learn these wonderful truths, then our spiritual life takes on a new dimension, and God begins to be glorified in our life because we see the blessings that are ours are the result of the divine working and not any kind of cooperation in which he does his part and I do my part and thus I have reason for thinking that I have some basis by which I may receive some praise from God for making a particular decision for Him. The whole tone of a man's life changes when he comes to understand the doctrines of the sovereign grace of God. You can tell it. If you'll

look at a Christian, you will find the whole level of his spiritual life has become a different level when he understands these great doctrines and some of you who are sitting in the audience, I know when you are saying yes, yes, yes, but some of you, I am still a little perplexed about you as Paul was about the Galatians because the tone of the belief in the sovereign grace of God is not there yet at least ostensibly.

I am not the Holy Spirit. I cannot of course know what really goes on down within, but I do know this. When a man comes to understand the sovereign grace of God, his life does change and there is an appreciation for divine things and the salvation God has given us that is deep and great and it is motivating. And I would love to know that in Believers Chapel in the years that God keeps this assembly as a testimony for the Lord Jesus Christ that that should be the tone of the ministry of the word of God here.

So, “He is looking for the one whom thou hast appointed,” and he repeats that again in verse 44. “And 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.’” [Hebrew indistinct] is the Hebrew expression that is used there and that’s what it means. It means determined, appointed for Isaac. So he knows that God has someone already picked out. It's God who makes the choices, you see.

Now let's read about the servant and Rebekah, verses 15 through 27. “And it came about before he had finished speaking.” He was speaking in his heart later on he says before he had finished speaking. Now doesn't that remind you of the passage in Isaiah chapter 65 and verse 24 where the prophet says giving the words of God, “It will also come to pass that before they call, I will answer and while they are still speaking, I will hear.”

“And it came about before he had finished speaking, that behold, Rebekah who was born to Bethuel the son of Milcah, the wife of Abraham's brother Nahor, came out with her jar on her shoulder. And the girl was very beautiful.” Now he was looking for someone of his relatives and he was looking for someone no doubt who had some spiritual maturity, but this is a plus. This is a plus. She was also very beautiful. And this is the servant who sees her beauty.

Now Isaac, when he falls in love with Rebekah, she looks like an ugly duckling. Of course, love changes a person’s eyes and mind. There are some of you in the audience, no doubt, who are saying you haven’t found that person yet. How will anyone ever be interested in me because I am not as attractive as so many that I know? Well isn’t it wonderful that God does move the hearts of some men, and they’ll come in and take one look at a young lady who may think like that and he will say she is the spitting image of Miss America. You cannot explain something like that, but it happens. So that’s a plus. She is beautiful.

Now let me read on. That got my mind thinking about other things, beauty. [Laughter] “The 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. Then the servant ran to meet her, and said, “Please let me drink a little water from your jar.” And she said, “Drink, my lord.” Isn’t that a nice way to speak to a man? [Laughter] That’s the first step in this whole process. “Drink my lord.”

Now you can see she is in the tradition of Sarah who called Abraham ‘lord.’ The servant must have said, ‘Ah, the right spirit.’ And she quickly lowered her jar to her hand, and gave him a drink. Now when she had finished giving him a drink, she said, “I will draw also for your camels until they have finished drinking.” Quite a bit of labor. So she quickly emptied her jar into the trough, and ran back to the well to draw, and she drew for all his camels. Meanwhile, the man was gazing at her in silence. That’s an interesting expression in the Hebrew text because it means something like he was looking steadfastly at her; keeping silent because you see, he still does not know that she is the right one.

He doesn’t even know, at this point, that she is from the right family and he watches her go through all of the motions that he has just mentioned in his prayer, but he still doesn’t know that she is related to Abraham and Isaac, and so he is watching very carefully in silence, observing everything that’s happening just waiting no doubt to ask the question, “Whose daughter are you?” Now if she replies, “I am the daughter of Pildash, the son of so-and-so of Mesopotamia.” Well that means the

whole thing has fallen to the ground and he had to start all over again. So he is watching very, very closely.

Verse 21: Meanwhile, the man was gazing at her in silence, to know whether the Lord had made his journey successful or not. Then it came about when the camels had finished drinking that the man took a gold ring weighing a half-shekel and two bracelets for her wrists weighing ten shekels of gold, and said, and this is the question, "Whose daughter are you? Please tell me, is there room for us to lodge in your father's house?" He is pretty confident, and she said to him, "I am the daughter of Bethuel." And I can just see him now. "[Johnson sighs, followed by laughter], I know Bethuel." "Daughter of Bethuel, the son of Milcah, whom she bore to Nahor." Again she said to him, "We have plenty of both straw and feed, and room to lodge in."

The daughter of Bethuel. She really was his first cousin, Isaac's first cousin or as we say more accurately often in the Southeast, I guess second cousin they would say perhaps in the Southwest. I don't know, second cousin. But really first cousin, once removed. That's what she was. That was her relationship to Isaac. First cousin, once removed. The granddaughter of Terah or the great-granddaughter as over against Isaac, the granddaughter. So there is the relationship necessary.

Now the servant recognizes that God has answered his prayer. "Then the man bowed low and worshiped the Lord and said, "Blessed be the Lord Yahweh, the God of my master Abraham, who has not forsaken His lovingkindness, His covenant faithfulness, and His truth toward my master; as for me, the Lord has guided me in the way to the house of my master's brother."

Many men, when God has blessed them, become proud and arrogant, but in the case of the servant, there is the true attitude. Success humbles this man of God and he realizes that he has been a tool in the hand of God to accomplish the great purposes of God. That's enough to make any man humble to realize that God should perhaps have used him in the ministry of the word of God. There can be nothing greater. Nothing more God glorifying and really nothing more man humbling than to realize that you have been a servant, an instrument, an agent in the accomplishment of the

purposes of God. How great a privilege it is to stand behind a pulpit like this and proclaim the word of God! Nothing is greater. As Mr. Spurgeon has said, “If God has called you to be a missionary, do not stoop to be a king.” That's true. So the servant has been used to accomplish the purpose of God.

Now in verse 28 through 33, we have the servant and Laban, and I will read this quickly for the time's sake. “Then the girl ran and told her mother's household about these things.” Evidently her father was either ill or incapacitated in some way because Laban seems to have at least equal responsibility in the affairs of the home and Laban was Rebekah's brother. She told her mother's household about these things. “Now Rebekah had a brother whose name was Laban; and Laban ran outside to the man at the spring and it came about that when he saw the ring and the bracelets on his sister's wrists.”

That's rather interesting because that shows that Laban's hospitality is not altogether altruistic because you see he looks and he sees the ring, the bracelets, and he recognizes that whoever this is, he is a man of wealth and if already knows he is Abraham, he knows he is the rich uncle from down in Palestine. And so naturally, he would like some help himself. And so in verse 31, he says, “Come in, blessed of the Lord! Why do you stand outside since I have prepared the house, and a place for the camels?” So 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.”

Now in verse 34 through verse 39, we have already read these verses and I am going to take the liberty of saying nothing about them because they really are repetitious for the most part of what has preceded except to point out that this is the testimony of the servant which the servant gives in answer to the question about telling his business. And so he begins by pointing out how God has richly blessed Abraham and Isaac, and as a matter of fact has given everything that he has into the hand of Isaac. Isaac is the heir of Abraham. And furthermore, he is the son of Sarah in her old age

and I have been taken, I have been made to swear on oath that he shall not have a wife from the daughters of the Canaanites but from his own father's house.

I think it's rather interesting . I don't know how important this is, but I think it does have some importance and that's I say to you young people. There are a number of young people who have often contracted marriage without any regard whatsoever to the financial responsibility of the person whom you are marrying. Now love is of course more significant I think than financial responsibility perhaps, but it is important to know the financial responsibility of the person that you are marrying. It's not necessary to obtain a Dunn & Bradstreet report before you say yes, but nevertheless, it is interesting, is it not, that when the servant gives his testimony concerning Abraham and Isaac, he begins by giving a kind of financial report, because he is making a proposal, and he is letting Rebekah and the family know that Isaac is a financially responsible person. He is not saying, and we don't conclude from this that a person has to be as wealthy as Abraham or Isaac in order to contract a marriage. Most of us would not have been able to marry, but nevertheless it is important and here that's what we have.

Now when you turn to verse 50 and I want to read the next section in which we have the servant and Rebekah's departure. Verse 50, we read. “Then Laban and Bethuel answered and said, "The matter comes from the Lord.” Even they confess that there is such a thing as irresistible grace. They see that God has so worked that this is something that he has done and while they do not stand on the same spiritual ground evidently as an Abraham or an Isaac, they are able to see the working of God.

“This matter has come from the Lord, so we cannot speak to you good or bad. Behold Rebekah is before you, take her and go, and let her be the wife of your master's son, as the Lord has spoken." And it came about when Abraham's servant heard their words that he bowed himself to the ground before the Lord and the servant brought out articles of silver and articles of gold, and garments, and gave them to Rebekah.” And here is some common grace thrown in too in the latter part of verse 53 and he also gave precious things to her brother and to her mother. There are

blessings that pertain to those who are unbelievers because they are associated with believers. That is true.

“Then he and the men who were with him ate and drank and spent the night. When they arose in the morning, he the servant said, "Send me away to my master." But her brother and her mother said, "Let the girl stay with us a few days, say ten; and afterward she may go." And he said to them, "Do not delay me, since the Lord has prospered my way. Send me away that I may go to my master." That's the characteristic of the world. They want to keep the saints of God in the world. They are willing to praise the person who has made a decision for the Lord and make some nice comments concerning them, but they don't want you to leave them. They want you to stay. And of course, if you stay, then you come under the influence of the world and often the decision becomes a lost opportunity. The servant wants quick, swift action and separation.

And they said, "We will call the girl and consult her wishes." Then they called Rebekah and said to her, "Will you go with this man?" And she said, "I will go." That's free agency. She thought of course. She was making that decision of herself, but the Lord had already appointed her for Isaac. Free agency, yes. Free will, no. “Thus they sent away their sister Rebekah and her nurse with Abraham's servant and his men. And they 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." Then Rebekah arose with her maids, and they mounted the camels and noticed and followed the man. So the servant took Rebekah and departed.”

And then in the last few verses, we read of the arrival at Isaac's place. “Now Isaac had come from going to Beer-lahai-roi; for he was living in the Negev. And Isaac went out to meditate.” There is an evidence of some spirituality in this man Isaac, although not of the stature of Abraham's. “Isaac went out to meditate in the field toward the evening; and he lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, camels were coming.” You see this is ultimately a picture of the church as it anticipates reaching heaven in the presence of the Lord, and there are some indications of the coming of the Lord that are available through the New Testament epistles. There have been books written entitled

“Behold, the Camels are Coming” speaking of the signs, the trends in the Christian church that antedate the coming of the Lord.

“And Rebekah lifted up her eyes, and when she saw Isaac she dismounted from the camel. She 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. And the servant told Isaac all the things that he had done. Then Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent, and he took Rebekah, and she became his wife, and he loved her.” What a fitting conclusion to a great chapter: “and he loved her.” Cannot help but think of Jeremiah, chapter 31 in which God says, “I have loved you with an everlasting love.” He loved her. Thus Isaac was comforted after his mother's death.

Let me say just a few words if you don't mind this morning. This is a beautiful example of the finding of God's will in the life and the words from Proverbs, chapter 3 are significant: leaning not unto our own understanding, but trusting in the Lord is really the secret to the obtaining of the will of God for our lives. And we have the promise that He will guide us in the way. Godliness is the chief ingredient of an ideal marriage. The will of God is the concern of Abraham, Isaac.

It seems not only the servant, but Rebekah as well and even Laban and the family accede to the permanency of the will of God. The thing has come from the Lord, but the most remarkable thing about this chapter to me has always been, what a beautiful and remarkable typical event it is, picturing the triune God's activity of building the church in the present age for that is what God is doing; building a bride for the Lord Jesus Christ. Abraham of course represents the father, the first member of the Trinity who plans, who arranges the marriage of his son, and he arranges it and plans it in all eternity. He appoints all who are to belong to that bride in ages past. God knows every single member of the church, the body of Christ.

And then there is Isaac, who is the son. And Isaac is preparing a place for his bride, awaiting the union that will take place when Rebekah comes to him. What a wonderful analogy there is between Isaac and the Lord Jesus too. Isaac was promised before he actually was born. The Lord Jesus was promised before he was born. Isaac appeared at the appointed time. The Lord Jesus

appeared at the appointed time; the fullness of time. Isaac was conceived miraculously as God worked in the dead bodies of Abraham and Sarah, and Isaac was born. The Lord Jesus was conceived of a virgin. Isaac was offered up by the father. He was obedient to death. He was brought back from the dead typically.

And isn't it interesting too that when Rebekah finally meets Isaac, he has already gone through these experiences. He is, in a sense, a person who has been dead and resurrected and that of course is the kind of person in whom we believe today, one whom the father has put to death. Thou hast brought me into the dust of death, but one who has come forth from the grave in resurrection. Isaac, unseen by her, goes out to meet her at the end of the journey and so we, never having seen our Lord Jesus Christ, look forward to the trumpets sounding and our meeting Him in the air and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Rebekah illustrates the church, the chaste bride, who prepares to meet the bridegroom, the one of whom Paul speaks, when he says, “I have betrothed you to the Lord Jesus as a pure virgin and also beautiful. A marriage that is preplanned by God in eternity past, chosen in him before the foundation of the world, love before we actually see him and returning his love before we have seen him. Whom we love, not having seen. So we do love him. We are on the way to meeting him.

And we are guided along the way by the unnamed servant, the Holy Spirit, and just as Rebekah made her way to meet Isaac, so we today, all of us who are in the body of Christ are on the way to meeting our great Isaac to whom we shall be married forever and then loved forever by the Son of God. I wish I had time to turn to John chapter 17 and point out some of the analogies that exist there. The servant of course is one who is unnamed, Holy Spirit. That's not the name of the third person of the Trinity. That's a title as I have said. So the unnamed servant throughout illustrates for us the work of the Holy Spirit in calling out the elected appointed church.

How does he do it? Well he told Rebekah's family who the son was. He also told how he had been honored by the father. He spoke about his riches. In other words, it is the work of the Holy Spirit to take the things of Christ and show them unto those that are potentially a part of the

bride. That's why we preach the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. That's why in all of the ministry, there should always be predominant the note of the riches of our crucified Savior. That's why Paul said, “I determine not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ and Him crucified.” That is the marriage that extols the glories of the father and the son and that's the message by which the unnamed servant calls the appointed ones into the fellowship of the true believing church. And then of course, Rebekah's “I will go” represents the decision from the divine initiative ultimately by which she enters into relationship with the servant, with the son, and with the father. What a wonderful story it is of true love!

It is possible that you are sitting in this audience and you do not know anything about membership in the body of Christ. That comes when we have responded to the good news concerning our greater Isaac, the Lord Jesus. When you have come to know your own sin and your own need, and you have sensed that you are on the way to perishing by the grace of God having been enlightened by the Holy Spirit, brought to the knowledge of your sin, you have been given the gift of repentance and faith and you have turned and said, I thank Thee Lord for the gift of the Lord Jesus Christ and salvation, forgiveness, justification, all of the other blessings through Him. I turn from my trust in my good works and I trust only in the good work that he has performed. May God move in your heart, so that by the grace of God, you turn from all other trusts in anything human to hang forever upon the saving work of the Lord Jesus Christ. May God help you by His grace to respond. Will you go with the church of Jesus Christ on the way to meet our great bridegroom in the heavens? Come with us. Put your trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. It is so simple. What a terrible thing to sit here in this audience and hear the gospel of the Lord Jesus and not respond. Come to him.

Shall we stand for the benediction?

[Prayer] We are grateful to thee Lord for this wonderful love story and it does remind us of the everlasting love with which thou hast loved us. How thankful we are that in the ages past, it was appointed that we should come and believe and O God, we do pray that if there are some in this

audience who have not yet responded, give them no rest nor peace until they come joining us as we make our journey led by the unnamed servant, the Holy Spirit, to the presence of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ. May grace, mercy and peace go with us.

For his sake. Amen.