

The Woman at the Well

- ¹ Now Abraham was old, well advanced in years. And the LORD had blessed Abraham in all things.
- ² And Abraham said to his servant, the oldest of his household, who had charge of all that he had, "Put your hand under my thigh,
- ³ that I may make you swear by the LORD, the God of heaven and God of the earth, that you will not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell,
- ⁴ but will go to my country and to my kindred, and take a wife for my son Isaac."
- ⁵ The servant said to him, "Perhaps the woman may not be willing to follow me to this land. Must I then take your son back to the land from which you came?"
- ⁶ Abraham said to him, "See to it that you do not take my son back there.
- ⁷ The LORD, the God of heaven, who took me from my father's house and from the land of my kindred, and who spoke to me and swore to me, 'To your offspring I will give this land,' he will send his angel before you, and you shall take a wife for my son from there.
- ⁸ But if the woman is not willing to follow you, then you will be free from this oath of mine; only you must 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.
- ¹⁰ Then the servant took ten of his master's camels and departed, taking all sorts of choice gifts from his master; and he arose and went to Mesopotamia to the city of Nahor.

¹¹ And he made the camels kneel down outside the city by the well of water at the time of evening, the time when women go out to draw water.

¹² And he said, "O LORD, God of my master Abraham, please grant me success today and show steadfast love to my master Abraham.

¹³ Behold, I am standing by the spring of water, and the daughters of the men of the city are coming out to draw water.

¹⁴ Let the young woman to whom I shall say, 'Please let down your jar that I may drink,' and who shall say, 'Drink, and I will water your camels'-- let her be the one whom you have appointed for your servant Isaac. By this I shall know that you have shown steadfast love to my master."

¹⁵ Before he had finished speaking, behold, Rebekah, who was born to Bethuel the son of Milcah, the wife of Nahor, Abraham's brother, came out with her water jar on her shoulder.

¹⁶ The young woman was very attractive in appearance, a maiden whom no man had known. She went down to the spring and filled her jar and came up.

¹⁷ Then the servant ran to meet her and said, "Please give me a little water to drink from your jar."

¹⁸ She said, "Drink, my lord." And she quickly let down her jar upon her hand and gave him a drink.

¹⁹ When she had finished giving him a drink, she said, "I will draw water for your camels also, until they have finished drinking."

²⁰ So she quickly emptied her jar into the trough and ran again to the well to draw water, and she drew for all his camels.

²¹ The man gazed at her in silence to learn whether the LORD had prospered his journey or not.

²² When the camels had finished drinking, the man took a gold ring weighing a half shekel, and two bracelets for her arms weighing ten gold shekels,

²³ and said, "Please tell me whose daughter you are. Is there room in your father's house for us to spend the night?"

²⁴ She said to him, "I am the daughter of Bethuel the son of Milcah, whom she bore to Nahor."

25 She added, "We have plenty of both straw and fodder, and room to
spend the night."
26 The man bowed his head and worshiped the LORD
27 and said, "Blessed be the LORD, the God of my master Abraham, who
has not forsaken his steadfast love and his faithfulness toward my
master. As for me, the LORD has led me in the way to the house of
my master's kinsmen."
28 Then the young woman ran and told her mother's household about
these things.
29 Rebekah had a brother whose name was Laban. Laban ran out toward
the man, to the spring.
30 As soon as he saw the ring and the bracelets on his sister's arms, and
heard the words of Rebekah his sister, "Thus the man spoke to me,"
he went to the man. And behold, he was standing by the camels at
the spring.
31 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 So the man came to the house and unharnessed the camels, and gave
straw and fodder to the camels, and there was water to wash his feet
and the feet of the men who were with him.
33 Then food was set before him to eat. But he said, "I will not eat until I
have said what I have to say." He said, "Speak on."
34 So he said, "I am Abraham's servant.
35 The LORD has greatly blessed my master, and he has become great.
He has given him flocks and herds, silver and gold, male servants and
female servants, 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 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 clan and take a wife
for my son.'
39 I said to my master, 'Perhaps the woman will not follow me.'
40 But he said to me, 'The LORD, before whom I have walked, will send
his angel with you and prosper your way. You shall take a wife for my
son from my clan and from my father's house.

41 Then you will be free from my oath, when you come to my clan. And
if they will not give her to you, you will be free from my oath.'

42 "I came today to the spring and said, 'O LORD, the God of my master
Abraham, if now you are prospering the way that I go,
43 behold, I am standing by the spring of water. Let the virgin who
comes out to draw water, to whom I shall say, "Please give me a little
water from your jar to drink,"
44 and who will say to me, "Drink, and I will draw for your camels also,"
let her be the woman whom the LORD has appointed for my master's
son.'

45 "Before I had finished speaking in my heart, behold, Rebekah came
out with her water jar on her shoulder, and she went down to the
spring and drew water. I said to her, 'Please let me drink.'
46 She quickly let down her jar from her shoulder and said, 'Drink, and I
will give your camels drink also.' So I drank, and she gave the camels
drink also.

47 Then I asked her, 'Whose daughter are you?' She said, 'The daughter
of Bethuel, Nahor's son, whom Milcah bore to him.' So I put the ring
on her nose and the bracelets on her arms.

48 Then I bowed my head and worshiped the LORD and blessed the
LORD, the God of my master Abraham, who had led me by the right
way to take the daughter of my master's kinsman for his son.

49 Now then, if you are going to show steadfast love and faithfulness to
my master, tell me; and if not, tell me, that I may turn to the right
hand or to the left."

50 Then Laban and Bethuel answered and said, "The thing has come
from the LORD; we cannot speak to you bad or good.

51 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."

52 When Abraham's servant heard their words, he bowed himself to the
earth before the LORD.

53 And the servant brought out jewelry of silver and of gold, and
garments, and gave them to Rebekah. He also gave to her brother
and to her mother costly ornaments.

⁵⁴ And he and the men who were with him ate and drank, and they spent the night there. When they arose in the morning, he said, "Send me away to my master."
⁵⁵ Her brother and her mother said, "Let the young woman remain with us a while, at least ten days; after that she may go."
⁵⁶ But 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."
⁵⁷ They said, "Let us call the young woman and ask her."
⁵⁸ And they called Rebekah and said to her, "Will you go with this man?" She said, "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 thousands of ten thousands, and may your offspring possess the gate of those who hate him!"
⁶¹ Then Rebekah and her young women arose and rode on the camels and followed the man. Thus the servant took Rebekah and went his way.
⁶² Now Isaac had returned from Beer-lahai-roi and was dwelling in the Negeb.
⁶³ And Isaac went out to meditate in the field toward evening. And he lifted up his eyes and saw, and behold, there were camels coming.
⁶⁴ And Rebekah lifted up her eyes, and when she saw Isaac, she dismounted from the camel
⁶⁵ and said to the servant, "Who is that man, walking in the field to meet us?" The servant said, "It is my master." So she took her veil and covered herself.
⁶⁶ And the servant told Isaac all the things that he had done.
⁶⁷ Then Isaac brought her into the tent of Sarah his mother and took Rebekah, and she became his wife, and he loved her. So Isaac was comforted after his mother's death.

Genesis 24:1-67

Last Words

Genesis 24 is the longest chapter in the book of Genesis. It is the second longest story, second only to the Flood. Much of the information in the story appears twice: once for us and once for the people who we meet half way through. It begins with the very last words of Abraham. We are warned of this at the start, “Now Abraham was old, well advanced in years” (Gen 24:1; cf. Josh 13:1; 23:1; 1 Kgs 1:1). What follows is the most important thing a person could possibly think of for the continuation of a story that began back in Genesis 3:15 when God promised the woman that she would conceive and give birth to a Seed who would crush the head of the serpent.

An Obscure Mission

The story begins with Abraham calling his servant for a vital mission. This calling is based on the fact that “The LORD had blessed Abraham in all things” (Gen 24:1). The prophecy had said, “I will bless you and make your name great” (12:2). God has thus fulfilled his promise to Abraham. Because God has blessed him, Abraham is now free to make this dying request, especially since the blessing included this: “I will surely bless you, and I will surely

multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore” (Gen 22:17). For, Abraham’s dying request is that his servant go and find a wife for his only begotten son, Isaac. There can be no offspring if there is no wife. This is the connection back to Genesis 3:15.

The request is very specific. “You will not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell, but will go to my country and to my kindred, and take a wife for my son Isaac” (24:3b-4). Later on, Moses will command Israel, “You shall not intermarry with them [“The Hittites, the Girgashites, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, seven nations more numerous and mightier than you”]” (Deut 7:3). What most commentaries miss is a main reason for Abraham’s command.

Some will say it was *merely* customary and cultural. The common ancient practice of endogamy had people marry within certain community limits. I suspect this has something to do with it, but not everything. You will find some saying that racism was so powerful in the ancient world that this is the result. That is nonsense in this instance. Others will say Abraham wanted to get a wife

from **other believers**, so that Isaac would not marry a pagan. But there is no reason to think that anyone in the group that Isaac's wife will come from is practicing the religion of Abraham. In fact, the whole point of Genesis seems to be to say that no one is, that's why God had to call Abraham to himself.

When we look at the nations Israel was not to marry, which included the Canaanites which Abraham specifically forbade Isaac from marrying, we learn that these people are **the corrupted seed of the nephilim** (cf. **Num 13:29, 33**). Abraham seems to understand that his offspring must be pureblood. This is, after all, part of that promise to Eve—"her offspring." So he sends his servant east of Canaan, back to **Haran** (today's southern Turkey), headquarters of the moon god Nanna/Sin/Alla[h],¹ to his brother's family (whom we saw in a genealogy in **22:20-24**).

Abraham's servant is unnamed, but it will become clear from the story that he has taken the worship of the LORD for himself. He is devout, loyal, and a man to be trusted by

¹ For the relationship of Allah to the moon god in ancient times see, "New Archeological Discovery of the Moon God Confirms the Oldest Reference to Allah," Shoebat Foundation, Sept 16, 2014, at <http://shoebat.com/2014/09/16/new-archeological-discovery-moon-god-confirms-oldest-reference-allah/>, last accessed 9-25-2014.

Abraham with a very important task. How incredible is it that a man charged with a task that would eventually lead to the birth of Jesus himself is **not even named**. We have no idea who he was. Without his obedience and success, there would be no Jacob, not Israel, no Jesus. That is how important this mission was. And yet, he does it in completely obscurity. Anonymity is often the way God likes it, perhaps to teach us about our own pride. He knows who his servants are, and his knowledge of what they do is the only one that matters.

Remember what Jesus said about prayer? “**And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you**” (**Matt 6:5-6**). Well, this man’s entire mission was like this. God delights in such things, even though to us we think that the famous and powerful people will really get God’s attention. After all, they get ours. Think about this the next time you think you need to

be known for some good deed that you are doing in the name of the Lord.

Oath and Covenant

To further impress upon us and the servant the vital nature of this mission, Abraham makes the man swear an oath. It is a most unusual oath. The man has to put his hand under Abraham's thigh (Gen 24:2) and swear. The word "thigh" (*yarek*) is also the word "loin." Thus, many speculated that the picture may have something to do with the covenant of circumcision. At the very least, placing your hand by the vessel of procreation in a sworn oath would be a solemn and apt reminder of the duty set before you.

To make this oath even more certain, he had to "swear by the LORD, the God of heaven and God of earth" (Gen 24:3). This language sounds very much like what Jesus and James forbid in the NT. "Do not take an oath at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, or by the earth, for it is his footstool" (Matt 5:34-35; cf. James 5:12). As we saw a couple of chapters ago (Gen 21:31, see sermon: *The Abimelech Manoeuvre*), oath taking continues on in the NT

by Jesus, the Apostles, and the churches, so we do not want to misunderstand these passages.

What is put before us here is the absolute **seriousness** of this oath. The language harkens back to Genesis 1. This is the God who made heaven and earth. He is the God who indwells heaven and earth. He is the God of heaven and earth. He is Yahweh, the LORD, the True and Living God. His power is beyond comprehension. His knowledge is cannot be plumbed. Swear by this God, for he will hear your oath and hold you to it. “**If you make a vow to the LORD your God, you shall not delay fulfilling it, for the LORD your God will surely require it of you, and you will be guilty of sin**” (**Deut 23:21**). Summarizing all of this, Augustine said, “**This surely was prophetic of the fact that the Lord God of heaven and the Lord of the earth would one day come in flesh fashioned from that thigh**” (*City of God* 16.33).

Faith and The LORD’s Angel

I want to add a little more to the prophetic nature of this oath, by looking at the man’s response and then what Abraham says in return. The man has a legitimate concern. “**Perhaps the woman may not be willing to follow me to**

this land. Must I then take your son back to the land from which you came?” (Gen 24:5). In other words, what if I go all the way up there, spend months away, use up a large portion of your money, and come back empty handed because she won’t come with me? What do you want me to do then?

Abraham’s response is wonderful. He **doesn’t move to Plan B**. “Oh, I hadn’t thought of that. Well, if she does that, then bribe the father with all the money you have” or “I want you to kidnap her and bring her back against her will” or some other such nonsense. Abraham’s response is **the response of faith**—**faith rooted in the promise**. First he says, “**See to it that you do not take my son back there**” (Gen 24:6). God had sworn to Abraham that his seed would inherit *this* land—Canaan—and to take Isaac out of it would be to disregard the promise, for he might never come back. No, Isaac must not be allowed to leave. Abraham’s faith is evident.

Next, we see **the object of that faith** in full view. He says, “**The LORD, the God of heaven, who took me from my father’s house and from the land of my kindred, and who spoke to me and swore to me, ‘To your offspring I**

will give this land,' he will send his angel before you, and you shall take a wife for my son from there” (24:7). The idea is repeated in vs. 40, “The LORD before whom I have walked, will send his angel with you and prosper your way.” These amazing verses teach a plurality of a Godhead according to what we now know of this angel, both as we have seen him in the Abraham narratives and in what is later said about him.

First, there is the “God of heaven.” He is the same “LORD” who threw down fire and sulfur from heaven (Gen 19:24). Second, there is “his angel.” We are very familiar with him by now. Three times we have seen “the Angel of the LORD” explicitly in the Abraham sagas (a fourth is implied; Gen 18:1-2; 19:1; and more are inferred). He comes to Hagar, who calls him the All-Seeing God (Gen 16:13) who promised her that he would personally multiply her offspring. Curiously, he also came to her by a well of water (16:7). He comes to Hagar again by a well of water (21:19). In this second story, the text calls him “God” (19). The third story has the Angel calling to Abraham from heaven saying, “Now I know that you fear God ... by myself I have sworn ... I will surely bless you,

and I will surely multiply your seed” (22:12, 16, 17). In this story, the Angel is called both “God” and “Yahweh.” Abraham most certainly has this same angel in mind now.

As we read our verses again, the KJV is helpful in letting us see important words that will return in later passages about this angel. “He shall send his angel before (*paneh*) thee” ... “The LORD, before whom I walk (*halak*), will send His angel (*malak*) with thee, and prosper thy way (*derek*)” (Gen 24:7, 40 KJV). Later in the Bible, the language of these verses will be utilized and developed into some remarkable prophecies.

The first is found in Exodus 23:20-21. “Behold, I send an angel (*malak*) before (*paneh*) you to guard you on the way (*derek*)” (Ex 23:20). “For My angel (*malak*) will go (*halak*) before (*paneh*) you and bring you in to *the land* of the Amorites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Canaanites, the Hivites and the Jebusites” (Ex 23:23 NAS). They are to “obey his voice” and if they do not he will not “pardon your transgression” which is able to do because “My name is in him” (21).

In Judges 2, this very person—“the angel (*malak*) of the LORD” appears before all the people and says, “I brought

you up out of Egypt and led you into the land” (Jdg 2:1). He said that he made a covenant with Israel (1), but that they have not obeyed him (2). The people weep, and Joshua dismisses them and “the sons of Israel went (*halak*) each to his inheritance to possess the land” (Jdg 2:6).

Many years later, the prophet Isaiah uses the language and says, “A voice is calling, ‘Clear (*panah*) the way (*derek*) for the LORD in the wilderness; Make smooth in the desert a highway for our God” (Isa 40:3 NAS). The voice who would do the preparing here would be John the Baptist (Matt 3:3 etc.). But who is this “God?”

Finally, Malachi says, “Behold I send my angel (*malak*), and he shall prepare [clear] (*panah*) the way (*derek*) before my face (*paneh*). And presently the Lord, whom you seek, and the angel (*malak*) of the testament [covenant], whom you desire, shall come to his temple. Behold he cometh, saith the Lord of hosts” (Mal 3:1 DRA).”² But unlike the great priest before them (2:6), Israel did not walk (*halak*) before the Lord (vs. 14).

² The Vulgate here is one of the few that translates “messenger” as “angel” (*angelum*). The Wycliffe 1388 translation has the Middle-English: “aungel” (from the Vulgate).

In these passages, the words “angel,” “way,” “walk,” and some form of “before” are each found. The idea of an angel going before the people is developed to a greater and greater degree such that by the end, we have a prediction of Messiah himself. This is most appropriate, given what Augustine said and how the roots of this idea are right here in the angel going before the servant of Abraham to find a wife for Isaac. What an amazing way Abraham’s words about this angel are put, then. Not only do they give comfort to the servant, they root his faith in God even while they ground the very coming of Christ in whom you are to place your faith.

One more thing can be said here. Abraham’s faith is so firm, he is so sure of what God will do, that he allows the servant an out, “**But if the woman is not willing to follow you, then you will be free from this oath of mine; only you must not take my son back there**” (24:8). Abraham **fully believes** that God has not given him this promise in vain. He knows God personally, face-to-face. God will not abandon him now. **This is the kind of faith that you are to have regarding God’s sure promises in Christ to you.** Beloved, if God has sworn that those who repent and trust

in his Son will be forgiven of their sins, will be raised from the dead (spiritually and physically), and will inherit the earth in the hereafter, then you are to completely confident of such a thing, for not only can God not lie, God is completely powerful to make it come to pass.

Prayer

So the servant takes the oath (**Gen 24:9**), takes **ten of Abraham's camels**—showing just how great Abraham had become, for camels were a top commodity in those days, takes choice gifts for a dowry, and **leaves for Mesopotamia** and the city of Nahor (10), which is either the same city as Haran, or one just a few miles away from it. This is about 425 miles as the crow flies. It would have been a *long* journey.

When he arrives near his destination, he makes the camels kneel down outside the city by the well of water (11). He does this in the evening, at the time “**when women go out to draw water.**” Then, this anonymous, godly servant does something I mentioned a moment ago. He **prays** (12-14; 42-44). It calls this prayer “**speaking**” (15), yet it calls it something else later. Have you ever wondered if God can hear silent prayer, prayer said only in

your head? Hopefully you know that he can, but here is a proof-text. “**Before I had finished speaking in my heart...**” (45). Does this not show **the unfathomable power of God** to hear and know what is in a person’s heart?

The **prayer is very specific**, as good prayers ought to be. **First**, he asks God for **success** on his errand. Sometimes I hear especially Reformed people pray “**if it be your will,**” and we should, as we get this phrase from **James 4:15**. But be careful how you say this. James is speaking primarily about people who do not seem to regard God as very active in regular, ordinary affairs. He isn’t saying this so that we can have an “out” if our prayers are not answered, much less does he say this so that we will not pray boldly. Of course, we ought to always remember that God’s secret will is what we want to have happen (indeed, it always **WILL** happen), but perhaps we also ought to pray more boldly than we often do, especially when we know that God’s revealed will is at stake. This servant knows that Abraham has sent him for this purpose, and so he cries out to God to make this journey a success and thereby “**show steadfast love to ... Abraham**” (**Gen 24:12**).

Next, he tells God his plan. That is, he does not just leave it all up to “chance” or to God’s sovereignty apart from his responsibility. He does not just think God will grant him success by having some girl blow out of the sky right onto the back of a sitting camel due to a very isolated tornado. “Behold, I am standing by the spring of water, and the daughters of the men of the city are coming out to draw water. Let the young woman to whom I shall say, ‘Please let down your jar that I may drink,’ and who shall say, ‘Drink, and I will water your camels’—let her be the one whom you have appointed for your servant Isaac. By this I shall know that you have sown steadfast love to my master” (13-14).

It might be tempting to read this prayer as something like a golden fleece, a test for God. But it is really much more ordinary than that, and yet it is a very wise plan. To discover why, let’s see what happens next. “Before he had finished speaking, behold, Rebekah, who was born to Bethuel the son of Milcah, the wife of Nahor, Abraham’s brother, came out with her water jar on her shoulder” (15). This verse is a true jewel, because it shows so clearly the sovereign power of the Good God.

A Sovereign God

First, God answers before the prayer is even finished. In other words, not only does God hear the prayer in your heart, he knows your prayer before you even say it! As Isaiah says, “Before they call I will answer; while they are yet speaking I will hear” (Isa 65:24). Friends, God knows all things, even the future. That is precisely what sets him apart from all other gods (Isa 44:7). Second, God’s answer is a good answer, just what Abraham wanted and needed. He sends Rebekah, whom we have met through a genealogy already, from Abraham’s very own family, to be the woman.

“An Excellent Wife”

When the servant saw her, he ran to meet her and said, “Please give me a little water to drink from your jar” (Gen 24:17). She did so gladly. “Drink, my lord” (18). She did so quickly. “She quickly let down her jar upon her hand and give him a drink.” Then, she went above all expectation, “She said, ‘I will draw water for your camels also until they have finished drinking’” (19). What you may not know is that the average camel would take up to 25 gallons of water after such a long journey. This means there is a

strong potential here that she had to make 100-200 trips back and forth with water just to refresh the beasts.

This is the very thing this clever servants plan and prayer was meant to uncover. He wanted an excellent wife for Isaac. What he found was a woman full of hospitality, courteous in nature, buoyant in spirit, cheerful in the giving, willing to serve, hard working, and strong for the journey ahead. He was able to watch this woman work for a good long time (“gazing at her in silence”; vs. 21) and discern that the LORD had indeed prospered his journey. Rebekah is presented as the ideal woman, someone **King Lemuel** would have had in mind for his Proverbs 31 wife.³

Worship

After the camels were watered, the man took a **gold ring and a couple of bracelets for her arms** (22). Both were of considerable value. He asked whose daughter she was and if there was any room for them to spend the night (23).

³ **GOING DEEPER:** As I said about marrying into a family of believers, it is most probable that Rebekah isn't a worshiper of Yahweh at this point. Yet, *she still has all of these characteristics*. Reflect upon this for a moment. This fascinating thought shows us that all humans are made in God's image, know right from wrong, and are in a general way capable of rising to great moral heights. But this is NOT what makes a person a Christian, nor is it what brings a person to heaven. For in spite of all these wonderful things, Rebekah, like all others, was still a sinner in need of salvation. When she comes into the tribe of Abraham and begins worshipping the God of Abraham and Isaac, she will find just that.

She told him that she was Nahor's grand-daughter (24). In a town the size of this? Providence. Then she added that they had plenty of room, not only for them, but for the beasts as well (25). Her generosity and kindness now comes to the front. The servant is so overwhelmed at the goodness and kindness of God in answering his prayer so quickly that his only response is to worship. "The man bowed his head and worshiped the LORD" (26).

This worship took the form of another prayer, this time a prayer of praise. "Blessed be the LORD, the God of my master Abraham, who has not forsaken his steadfast love and his faithfulness toward my master. As for me, the LORD has led me in the way to the house of my master's kinsmen" (27). Requesting things is not the only form of prayer. So is praise.

This worshipful prayer also had the effect of telling Rebekah who he was. Notice that he mentions Abraham. So she "ran" and told her mother's household about these things (28). I do not know if you have ever experienced moments of complete sovereignty like this, but if you have you know that they are pearls to be hidden away in your heart. They are things to never let go of, for they remind

us exactly what kind of a God we serve. They can be powerful aids to faith later on. And when we are reminded, we ought again and again to return to him in worship.

A Blessed Arrangement

At this point, we learn more about the family. We are introduced to a character who will appear later on in Genesis. It is Rebekah's brother. His name is Laban (Gen 24:29). He had put two and two together and realized that this was not a chance encounter, but a deliberate seeking of a mate for someone related to Abraham. That is what the ring and bracelets would have suggested. You don't just give that kind of wealth to a strange just for watering your camels, especially when he isn't a stranger at all, but is the servant of Abraham.

The typical middle-eastern hospitality now begins. "Come in, O blessed of Yahweh" (31). This does not mean Laban worshiped Yahweh, though he certainly would have known about Yahweh from Abraham years and years earlier. "I have prepared the house and a place for the camels" (31). He washes the man's feet (32; like Abraham did to the three visitors from heaven; Gen 18:4). He sets food before him (33). And they begin to talk. The servant

is so excited he will not eat until he has told his tale. So, for the next several verses (34-48) he recounts all that we have seen so far, with little deviation.

When he is finished, he wants to know if Rebekah might indeed be a woman Laban and Bethuel would be willing to let go to Abraham (49). Their response is cryptic, “The thing has come from the LORD; we cannot speak to you bad or good” (50).⁴ It seems to be an acknowledgment that this God has answered his prayers. The next verse confirms this. They give him Rebekah (51). “Take her and go.” (51). These verbs echo Abraham’s request. “Go ... take” (24:4). So the servant “took” and “went” (10). Now he is to “take” and “go” (51). Indeed, God has blessed his journey.

The man responds by bowing himself, not to Laban, but to the LORD. He is truly in awe of God’s providential hand in all of this. The Angel has gone before him in his journey. He gives an acceptable dowry of jewelry, silver, gold, garments, and ornaments (53). Then they ate and

⁴ This doesn’t mean that they worship the LORD, though it does mean that they recognize him as a real god.

drank. They spent the night. And asked to leave in the morning (54).

Suddenly, there is a snag, the first and only **snag**. Her brother and mother want Rebekah to stay for ten days (55). Is this legit? Is it a deceitful ploy to take his stuff and retain the girl? We don't know. We do know that he says, “**Do not delay me**” and then invokes the LORD who has prospered him in his way (56). “**Send me away that I may go to my master.**”

Incredibly, they call Rebekah in and ask her. I say “incredibly,” because this isn't the usual way of things. But here, **Rebekah is respected as a person** with desires. They actually ask her permission if she will go. “**I will go**” (58). This IS the woman, without a doubt. She is basically being depicted as **a female Abraham**:⁵ You don't know anyone,

⁵ There are many other things that point us in this direction too. Boice writes, “When Abraham was instructed to circumcise the males of his household, he did it ‘on that very day’ (Gen. 17:23). When he was commanded to send Sarah’s slave Hagar and Hagar’s son Ishmael away, it was “early the next morning” that Abraham put the command into effect (Gen. 21:14). Again, after Abraham was instructed to offer his son as a burnt offering, ‘early the next morning’ Abraham got up and made his preparations (Gen. 22:3). James Montgomery Boice, *Genesis: An Expository Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998), 721. Also Wenham, “Rebekah’s willingness to leave her land and kindred shows that she is, as it were, a female Abraham, who like him will be blessed. Her name, like his, contains the consonants *b* and *r*, which begin the verb “bless” (*brk*), a key word of this chapter (vv 1, 27, 31, 35, 48,

you don't know where you are going, you don't know who your husband will be, but you will go because the LORD has blessed the arrangement. After blessing Rebekah with (60) with a blessing for children,⁶ they send her away with her nurse (60-61). It says, he “took” her and “went,” thus fulfilling the mission of Abraham.

Isaac and Rebekah

The completion of the story does not tell us about Abraham, but Isaac. Isaac returns from a place called Beer-lahai-roi (62) or “The Well of the Life of Vision.” Another well! He was out “meditating” in the field, apparently in worship of God. When suddenly, he looked up and saw camels coming (63). Rebekah too lifted up her eyes (64) and together they met as one. “Who is that man, walking in the field to meet us?” (65). “It is my master.” “So she took her veil and covered herself.”

60).” Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 16–50*, vol. 2, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1998), 138.

⁶ GOING DEEPER: This blessing is very similar to one given earlier. “I will surely bless you, and I will surely multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. And your offspring shall possess the gate of his enemies” (Gen 22:17). Now it is, “Our sister, may you become thousands of ten thousands, and may your offspring possess the gate of those who hate him!” (Gen 24:60). Not only is this a blessing for children, it is a blessing for conquest and victory wherever her seed should go, even to the very gates of hell itself.

The servant told Isaac all the things that he had done (66), and Isaac brought Rebekah into the tent of Sarah his mother. Now, **the final taking** occurs. He took Rebekah, and **she became his wife, and he loved her** (67). And Isaac was comforted after his mother's death.

A Type of the Future

This is one of those great, classic love stories of antiquity. But it is a love story that has the hand of God written all over it, a story that only God could write, since it is actually true. Just reading it ought to make you long for such a love as this. For some, it will cause them to long for the love of spouse. For all, **it ought to cause us to long for the love of God**. And here, I talk about the love of God for his own spouse. Let me explain.

This story has long been understood by the church as a kind of typology. **Isaac is a type of Christ. Rebekah is a type of the church.**

One commentator says, “She was thought of before she knew it and was chosen when she did not know of the existence of her bridegroom.”⁴ So it has been with us, for

⁴ Donald Grey Barnhouse, *Genesis*, 2:30–31.

we were chosen in Christ “before the foundation of the world” (Eph 1:4 KJV). Isaac passed through his experience of sacrifice and resurrection before Rebekah knew him. The faithful servant left home to find her when she was still ignorant of Isaac’s existence. And when the servant found her, he initiated a contact and then induced her to come with him, not for himself, but for his absent master. Thus has the Holy Spirit sought us and drawn us to Jesus. As we travel through this life, he prepares us for when we will see Jesus face to face, much as the old servant of Abraham undoubtedly used the return trip to Beersheba to prepare Rebekah to love and live with Isaac.

If the Holy Spirit is wooing you now, may your response be as quick and positive as that of this girl who lived so long ago. “Will you go with this man?” “I will go,” she answered. May you respond as Rebekah did and start out joyfully for heaven, knowing that some day, at the end of your life journey, you—“without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless” (Eph. 5:27)—will meet Jesus face to face.⁷

⁷ James Montgomery Boice, *Genesis: An Expository Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998), 721–723.

The Woman at the Well

But there is a specific text to see this that only a few have noticed, though some have.⁸ It concerns the story of **Jesus and the woman at the well**. Remarkably, when we compare the two stories, some very curious parallels appear, parallels that if they occur by “chance” would be impossible (especially since “chance” is a non-thing). Both happen because of a **seed**. Abraham sends the servant out in order to find a wife for Isaac, his seed. Rebekah ends up becoming the mother of Christ. Both stories have a **well** play prominently in them. Both find a **man traveling outside of Israel** where they **meet a woman** (Jesus, curiously, goes to the place of Jacob’s well). Both have a **man talk to a woman** at a well (remember how important this was to the disciples, why is he talking to that woman?). Both men ask the woman to **give them a drink**. Both essentially ask the woman to **follow them**. Finally, in both stories, **worship** plays a very prominent role (see the chart at the end).

⁸ “Here, then, a woman proclaims Christ to the Samaritans, and at the end of the Gospels also the woman who saw him before all the others tells the apostles of the resurrection of the Savior.” (Origen, *Commentary on the Gospel of John* 13.179).

But **there are differences**. And they are wonderful, especially to anyone who doesn't feel like they meet up with the perfect standard set by Rebekah. Rebekah is beautiful. We get no hint of that from this **plain** woman at the well. Rebekah is of pure stock. The woman at the well is a **Samaritan**. Rebekah is a virgin. The woman at the well has had **five husbands** and is presently engaged in **fornication**. The man in Rebekah's story gives gold and silver and all manner of costly things. The man in John's story gives something far greater—**water to never make a person thirst again**. The man in Rebekah's story is a mere servant. The man in John's story is Jesus himself—**God in human flesh**.

Beloved, this is what the church of Jesus Christ is, not the perfect woman, but the Samaritan woman—the foreigner, outcast, plain looking sinner. Yet, and this is where Rebekah is so important, **Christ makes his bride to look just like Rebekah**, even though she is not. He does this by washing her with the word, making her pure and spotless, a new virgin prepared for her bridegroom for the day of glory (**Eph 5:25-27**). This is what Rebekah and

Isaac’s love truly points us all to. Let me conclude with the words of Origen,

Unless therefore you come daily to the wells, unless you daily draw water, not only will you not be able to give a drink to others, but also you yourself also will suffer “a thirst for the Word of God.”¹³ Hear also the Lord saying in the Gospels, “Let him who thirsts come and drink.”¹⁴ But [if], “you neither hunger nor thirst after justice,”¹⁵ and how will you be able to say, “As the deer pants after the fountains of water, so my soul pants after you, O God. My soul has thirsted after the living God; when shall I come and appear before his presence”?¹⁶ (Homilies on Genesis 10.3.)⁹

Rebekah and the Woman at the Well

	Genesis 24	John 4
A seed	² And Abraham said to his servant, the oldest of his household, who had charge of all that he had, "Put your hand under my thigh, ³ that I may make you swear by the LORD, the God of heaven and God of the earth, that you will not take a wife	⁴ And <u>he</u> had to pass through Samaria. ⁶ so <u>Jesus</u> , wearied as he was from his journey, was sitting beside the well. It was about the sixth hour.

¹³ Amos 8:11.

¹⁴ Jn 7:37.

¹⁵ Mt 5:6.

¹⁶ ¹⁶Ps 42:1–2 (41:2–3 LXX).

⁹ Mark Sheridan, *Genesis 12-50*, Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture OT 2 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 127.

	for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell ... ⁷ The LORD, the God of heaven, who took me from my father's house and from the land of my kindred, and who spoke to me and swore to me, 'To your <u>offspring</u> I will give this land,' he will send his angel before you, and you shall take a wife for my son from there.	
A Land Not Israel	⁴ but will <u>go to my country</u> and to my kindred, and take a wife for my son Isaac." ... ¹⁰ Then the servant took ten of his master's camels and departed, taking all sorts of choice gifts from his master; and he arose and went to Mesopotamia to the city of Nahor.	⁵ So he came to a town of Samaria called Sychar, near the field that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. ⁶ <u>Jacob's well</u> was there;
Woman at the well	Before he had finished speaking, behold, Rebekah, who was born to Bethuel the son of Milcah, the wife of Nahor, Abraham's brother, <u>came out with her water jar</u> on her shoulder.	⁷ A woman from Samaria <u>came to draw water</u> .
Give me a drink	¹⁷ Then the servant ran to meet her and said, " <u>Please give me a little water to drink from your jar.</u> "	⁷ Jesus said to her, " <u>Give me a drink.</u> "
Dialogue	¹⁸ She said, "Drink, my lord." And she quickly let down her jar upon her hand and gave him a drink. ¹⁹ When she had finished giving him a drink, she said, "I will draw water for your camels also, until they have finished drinking." ²⁰ So she quickly emptied her jar into the trough and ran again to the well to draw water, and she drew for all his camels.	¹¹ The woman said to him, "Sir, you have nothing to draw water with, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water? ¹² Are you greater than our father Jacob? He gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did his sons and his livestock." ¹³ Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, ¹⁴ but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life." ¹⁵ The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water, so that I will not be thirsty or have to come here to draw water."
Follow me idea	⁵ The servant said to him, "Perhaps the woman may not be willing to follow me to this land. Must I then take your son back to the land from which you came?"	¹⁰ Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water."
Worship	²⁶ The man bowed his head and <u>worshiped</u> the LORD ²⁷ and said, "Blessed be the LORD, the God of my master Abraham, who has not forsaken his steadfast love and his faithfulness toward my master. As for me, the LORD has led me in the way to the house of my master's kinsmen."	²⁰ Our fathers <u>worshiped</u> on this mountain, but you say that in Jerusalem is the place where people ought to worship." ²¹ Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. ²² You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. ²³ But the hour is coming,

		and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. ²⁴ God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth."
Contrast: virgin	¹⁶ The young woman was very attractive in appearance, a <u>maiden</u> whom no man had known. She went down to the spring and filled her jar and came up.	¹⁶ Jesus said to her, "Go, call your husband, and come here." ¹⁷ The woman answered him, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You are right in saying, 'I have no husband'; ¹⁸ for <u>you have had five husbands</u> , and the one you now have is not your husband. What you have said is true."
Contrast: family	²³ and said, "Please tell me whose daughter you are. Is there room in your father's house for us to spend the night?" ²⁴ She said to him, "I am the daughter of Bethuel the son of Milcah, whom she bore to Nahor." ... ²⁹ Rebekah had a brother whose name was Laban. Laban ran out toward the man, to the spring. ³⁰ As soon as he saw the ring and the bracelets on his sister's arms, and heard the words of Rebekah his sister, "Thus the man spoke to me," he went to the man. And behold, he was standing by the camels at the spring. ³¹ 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."	⁹ The Samaritan woman said to him, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a woman of Samaria?" (For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.) ²⁷ Just then his disciples came back. They marveled that he was talking with a woman, but no one said, "What do you seek?" or, "Why are you talking with her?"
Servant/Messiah	⁽³⁴⁾ : So he said, " <u>I am Abraham's servant.</u> "	¹⁹ The woman said to him, "Sir, I perceive that you are <u>a prophet.</u> ²⁵ The woman said to him, "I know that Messiah is coming (he who is called Christ). When he comes, he will tell us all things." ²⁶ Jesus said to her, "I who speak to you am he."
Woman Runs to Tell	²⁸ Then the young woman <u>ran and told</u> her mother's household about these things.	²⁸ So the woman left her water jar and <u>went away into town and said to the people,</u> ²⁹ "Come, see a man who told me all that I ever did. Can this be the Christ?" ³⁹ Many Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony, "He told me all that I ever did." ⁴⁰ So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them, and he stayed there two days. ⁴¹ And many more believed because of his word. ⁴² They said to the woman, "It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is indeed the Savior of the world."

