

### Abraham Commissions His Servant to Go On a Journey

#### Genesis 24:1-9

Genesis 24:1-9 - *"Now Abraham was old, well advanced in age; and the LORD had blessed Abraham in all things. <sup>2</sup> So Abraham said to the oldest servant of his house, who ruled over all that he had, "Please, put your hand under my thigh, <sup>3</sup> and I will make you swear by the LORD, the God of heaven and the God of the earth, that you will not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell; <sup>4</sup> but you shall go to my country and to my family, and take a wife for my son Isaac."*

*<sup>5</sup> And the servant said to him, "Perhaps the woman will not be willing to follow me to this land. Must I take your son back to the land from which you came?"*

*<sup>6</sup> But Abraham said to him, "Beware that you do not take my son back there. <sup>7</sup> The LORD God of heaven, who took me from my father's house and from the land of my family, and who spoke to me and swore to me, saying, 'To your descendants I give this land,' He will send His angel before you, and you shall take a wife for my son from there. <sup>8</sup> And if the woman is not willing to follow you, then you will be released from this oath; only do not take my son back there." <sup>9</sup> So the servant put his hand under the thigh of Abraham his master, and swore to him concerning this matter."*

#### Background Notes

Let's begin our study of this longest chapter in Genesis with a few background notes. Verse 1 says that Abraham was old - well advanced in age. In fact, he was 140 years old. He was 100 years old when Isaac was born, and Genesis 25:20 says that Isaac was 40 years old when he and Rebekah were married. So Abraham was 140 at this point. Sarah had died, and Abraham wanted to find a wife for his son Isaac. Both father and a son trusted the Lord to bring the right woman into Isaac's life. This is a great lesson for us on trusting God about marriage, isn't it?

Abraham commissioned his servant to go back to the area of Haran to find a wife for Isaac. Haran was about 500 miles away, near where northeast Syria and northwest Iraq come together today, at the top of the "Fertile Crescent." Why go so far away for a wife? Why not marry a local Canaanite girl? Perhaps Abraham wanted Isaac to marry someone from his extended family. But more importantly, Abraham knew that God had declared that blessing would not come through the Canaanites. In Genesis 9:25-26, Noah said, *"Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants he shall be to his brethren."* And he said: *"Blessed be the LORD, the God of Shem, and may Canaan be his servant."*

Abraham surely knew this blessing and curse from Noah's time. The fact that Abraham had his servant take an oath about this matter indicates its importance. To "place the hand under the thigh" was a euphemistic way of saying that the hand was placed near the genital area. This oath had to do with Isaac's progeny, the promise of the seed of Abraham that

would now be carried on through Isaac and his wife. The blessing would be preserved by the offspring of Isaac and his wife, so this oath was vitally important.

## Doctrinal Points

### 1. Isaac is a picture or *type* of Christ at the present time.

Let's review the meaning of a *type*. Here's a brief definition of the word *type*: "a type is an Old Testament person, place, event, or other item, that illustrates or pictures New Testament truth." In Genesis 22 we saw the beautiful *type* of the sacrifice of Christ in the account of Abraham and Isaac at Mount Moriah. Abraham, a *type* of God the Father, was willing to sacrifice his beloved son. Isaac, a *type* of God the Son, went willingly to the place of sacrifice. What a great picture of God's love for us!

Hebrews 11:19 indicates that in the sacrifice of Isaac at Mount Moriah there is also a picture (*type*) of the resurrection of Christ. Hebrews 11:17-19: *"By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, 'In Isaac your seed shall be called,' concluding that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense."* There it is – it's not just our imagination! In these New Testament verses, God revealed that when Isaac was received back to Abraham at Mount Moriah, it was a *type* of the resurrection of Christ.

In Genesis 24, Isaac continued to be a *type* of Christ. However, he was now particularly a picture of Christ at the present time - not during His earthly ministry, but after His resurrection. Our Lord is now resurrected, and He is now with the Father. Meanwhile, a "Bride" for Christ is being called out of this world. The Church is being formed at the present time. So in this chapter Rebekah, the bride, represents the Church. As Abraham arranged for a bride to be found for Isaac, so God (pictured here in Abraham's plan) is working out His sovereign plans to find a bride for Christ, and to make that Bride ready for the future "Marriage Supper of the Lamb." What a great picture! In Genesis 24, Isaac is a picture or *type* of Christ at the present time.

### 2. The unnamed servant is a picture or *type* of the Holy Spirit at the present time.

The unnamed servant was probably Eliezer (Genesis 15). The fact that he had been with Abraham "from the beginning," and is unnamed here, may indicate that he portrays the Holy Spirit in this *type*. At the present time, the Holy Spirit is carrying out God's plans to call out a Bride for His Son, Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit is at work forming the Church.

Later in this chapter we'll see that the unnamed servant did not speak about himself, but only of Abraham the father, and Isaac the son and heir. In the same way, the Holy Spirit today does not speak of himself. He draws our attention to the love and wealth of the Father, and to the glories of the Son. About the Holy Spirit, the Lord Jesus said, *"He will glorify Me,*

*for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you. All things that the Father has are Mine. Therefore I said that He will take of Mine and declare it to you” (John 16:14-15).*

As Isaac did not go with the servant, but remained home with Abraham, so the Lord Jesus is not bodily on earth today, but is with the Father in Heaven. The Holy Spirit, like the unnamed servant, is here and is actively calling people to come by faith, out from this world, to become the Bride of Christ.

Notice in verse 8 that the servant was not to force the woman to come - she was to come of her own free will. In the same way, although the sovereignty of God is involved in every conversion, the Holy Spirit does not manipulate our “free wills” if we refuse to come. In Genesis 24 the unnamed servant is a picture or type of the Holy Spirit at the present time.

## **Practical Applications**

### **1. The Holy Spirit will not manipulate your will and force you to become a Christian if you do not want to.**

The doctrines of predestination and election and the sovereignty of God are quite clear in the Bible - but the Bible also teaches that the Holy Spirit will not manipulate your will and force you to become a Christian if you don't want to. That's certainly a practical application from this chapter.

If you're not yet a Christian, you can become a Christian today by receiving Jesus Christ as your personal Savior. He died for your sins! God wants you to enter His family, and He would like you to make that decision today - but He will not force you. If you don't want to become a Christian, the Holy Spirit will not manipulate your will and force you to become a Christian.

### **2. The more biblical counseling you get before marriage, the better your marriage will be later.**

How would you feel if you were in Isaac's situation - or in Rebekah's situation? How would you feel if your marriage was arranged, and if you couldn't even see the person you're marrying until your wedding day? That is certainly not the American way! However, arranged marriages are the norm in many cultures around the world - and there are far fewer divorces, by the way.

In most Western cultures, you fall in love and then marry. In many Eastern cultures the marriage is arranged, and the couple falls in love after marriage. Margie and I know a Christian couple from India whose marriage was arranged by their parents. We asked them if they were in love when they got married, and they said, No - in fact they didn't even know each other before their wedding! They told us they learned to love one another after their marriage, and they are happily married today. Their parents had arranged a good marriage!

Now I'm not suggesting that the American way has got to go, but I am strongly suggesting good and biblical pre-marriage counseling! The more godly, biblical counseling a person gets about his or her particular gifts and strengths and weaknesses, and what kind of spouse would best suit his or her personality and complement those strengths and weaknesses, the better off that person will be when falling in love and contemplating marriage. Do you agree? So - take to heart all the help and advice you can get from parents, from friends who are strong Christians, and from godly people who know you and care about you.

Remember - the more biblical counseling you get before marriage, the better your marriage will be later!