

The finding of Rebekah

~Other Speakers G-L: Raymond Golsworthy:

(This is the revision of "In quest of the bride"™, which was published in "A Witness and a Testimony"™, Nov. - Dec., 1960. Raymond Golsworthy rewrote it in Australia and gave it a new title.)

What a wonderful book the Bible is! It has been said that the whole Christian message is contained in the Old Testament, and explained in the New. Nowhere is that more apparent than in the story now before us. There are four main characters in Genesis 24, namely: Abraham (the loving father), Isaac (the beloved son), Eliezer (the faithful steward), and Rebekah (the chosen bride). These are unmistakable types or figures of: God the Father seen in Abraham, Christ the Son seen in Isaac, the Holy Spirit seen in Eliezer, the church seen in Rebekah.

Also, in their related activities, we have a remarkable survey of the age in which we now live. In the book of Acts, we read of God sending down the Holy Spirit to seek a bride for Christ, and we see souls responding and going forth to follow Him. All this is beautifully foreshadowed in the chapter before us. Let us look at those four main characters, one by one.

Looking first at Abraham, we see him depicted here as a father who is completely engrossed with one thing, the securing of a suitable bride for Isaac. The phrase, "my son"™, "my son"™, comes five times in six verses, and it indicates an all-governing obsession in the heart of Abraham at that time. The same, we may say, is true of God today. He must have a bride for Christ! If we could but see behind all that is written in the bible, that, most certainly, is what would appear: the great eternal God, creator and upholder of all things, and Lord over all history, now taken up with one thing, the securing of a worthy bride for His beloved Son. As we know, the whole bible ends with what is called "the marriage-supper of the Lamb"™ and we can say that all that preceded this, from Genesis one onwards, is actually directed to that end. That, really, is what the bible is all about and we could add that that is what existence is all about: a suitable and worthy partner for God's™ dear Son. That, we believe, is the mystery behind everything.

The bible shows us that God, in His own inscrutable sovereignty, has decreed that the bride of His Son shall be made up of redeemed human creatures, renewed and transformed by His own great grace, and thus made ready for the Lamb. All the events, types, figures and histories of the Old Testament are designed to contribute something to that glorious end and, once we see this eternal and paternal purpose, we have the key to everything! We believe that Abraham, the father of Isaac, is a beautiful illustration of this.

The second main figure in our story is of course, Isaac, the loved son of Abraham (Gen. 22:2). It is somewhat surprising that, although Isaac is in a very real sense, the central figure in the story, very little is here said about him. Rather does he appear as a silent observer; someone just waiting in the background, as it were, expecting the bride who would shortly be coming to him and well assured that his welfare was in the capable hands of another. This reminds us of the reward of the Lord Jesus in John 8:50: "I seek not mine own glory; there is One that seeketh." We also remember that, in actual fact, Isaac was here what we could call a "resurrection person"™, for, in Genesis chapter twenty-two, we read of his being sacrificed and "raised again"™, in a figure (Heb. 11:17-19). This is all true of Christ, but now, in chapter 24, he is, as we said, waiting to meet the person whom his father's™ faithful steward, would bring to him. The victor over death is waiting for his bride. How true all this is of Christ.

Right at the end of the story, we see the same Isaac going out into the field to meditate, and no doubt to pray, and it says that, "when he lifted up his eyes behold, the camels were coming" (verse 63). That, we dare to say, is what Christ is doing today and without a doubt, He, likewise can see that "the camels are coming"™; His bride is on her way, and nearly home!

The third character in our story is Eliezer, Abraham's™ servant or steward (Gen. 15:2). He was the one commissioned, early in chapter 24, to seek out a bride for the waiting bridegroom. The story of the commissioning itself occupies the first nine verses, and the rest of the chapter is taken up with the moving account of his diligent work of searching out, and bringing home, the chosen bride. It is all a beautiful foreshadowing of the Person and work of the Holy Spirit in the age in which we are now living. Much, of course, could be said about this, but the thought that impresses us most about Eliezer is his fervent zeal, which becomes apparent in so many ways. We read of him running in the exercise of his task (verse 17), and then of his refusing to eat when he finally reached the home of Laban, "until I have told mine errand" (verse 33). Also we are told how he and those that were with him, once they had secured Rebekah, rose up early in the morning eager to be on their way (verse 54). The key-verse of all in this respect seems to be verse 56, where Eliezer says, "Hinder me not seeing the Lord hath prospered my way!" Here was holy impatience indeed;

and it seems that an unquenchable fire was burning in his heart; he must get Rebekah back to Abraham and Isaac without delay! It all reminds us of Jeremiah who said that a similar fire was burning in his heart, and he was "weary with forbearing" and "could not stay" (Jer. 20:9).

How we should thank God for the burning zeal of the Holy Spirit! The world would do its best to retain its hold on those who belong to Christ, but the Holy Spirit will not be hindered. He will seek souls for Christ and He will find them, and He will bring them right home to the waiting Bridegroom! His language will ever be: "I will work, and who shall hinder it" (Isa. 43:13 RV).

We are reminded here of the fact that, when the Holy Spirit descended to His task on the day of Pentecost, He came as a rushing mighty wind (Acts 2:2). Eliezer, too, was much like that in Genesis 24, so gentle in all His dealings, but, behind everything, there was a fire that would not be quenched! We may say of the Holy Spirit, that He, just like the Lord Jesus, was inwardly compelled to work the works for which He was sent (John 9:4), and to finish the work which the Father had given Him to do (John 17:4). And all the riches of Christ were in His hand (Gen. 24:10).

That brings us to the last of the four characters, Rebekah herself. What a lovely character she was in every way; beautiful with a comeliness which God Himself must have put upon her (Ezek.16:14). We see her in the first place as a diligent daughter of the family, going out to the well, to water the family's flocks, and with the pitcher on her shoulder. The task was by no means easy, but she did it gladly and even offered to do the same for a passing stranger who, with his ten camels, was resting nearby. The stranger simply asked her for a drink, but she, from the fullness of her willing heart, simply replied, "I will draw water for thy camels also, until they have done drinking" (verse 19). It is evident, too, that, like her brother Laban, she was given to hospitality, for she readily invited the stranger to take advantage of the facilities of their home (verse 25; also see 1 Pet. 4:9, etc). She had very little to say when the stranger's gifts were put upon her, little knowing that they were a sure earnest of the much more that was yet to be hers (comp. Eph. 1:13, 14)! She even said little when the matter of a marriage with Isaac was being discussed, being well content to accept what was evidently proceeding from the Lord (verse 50).

The main feature about Rebekah, we would say, is that found in verses 57 and 58, where, with the same simple quietness, she voices her decision to leave all, and go forth with Eliezer into what must have been a new world, and to a God-designed marriage with Isaac. We are told that her mother and her brother simply said to her, "Wilt thou go with this man?", and she gave the simple answer, "I will go". It meant leaving home and family and embracing a new life and a new world. Just ahead, would be a strenuous journey of hundreds of miles, but the decision was clear and convincing, "I will go"!

Here is depicted, surely, the greatest decision that any man can make; to go forth unto Christ without the camp (see Heb.13:13). In verses 17-20, she had shown her willingness to give her services; now she is giving herself, something far more important, and more costly, and something carrying a far greater reward! And, in our terms, it is not just a matter of deciding for Christ; it is a matter of choosing life in the Spirit, or, we could say, choosing a life of journeying with the Spirit, into a day by day newness in everything. And, it would lead to an ever-deepening knowledge of Isaac himself. Can you imagine the talks about Isaac which Eliezer and Rebekah would have had during that long, long, journey?

Yes, those three words are so simple, "I will go" but who can measure the immensities bound up with them? The then unborn nation of Israel was but one of the fruits of that brave decision (Gen. 25:21-26) and only God knew what was to transpire after that. The long journey to Isaac would have been strenuous indeed, and fraught with all the dangers of desert travel, but Rebekah remained true to her word, and soon she saw Isaac coming out to meet her. Understandably, she "lighted off her camel" and "took a vail and covered herself" (verses 64, 65). We pray that we too may make the same far-reaching decision, and that we may remain faithful to the end, and receive the same glorious reward!

In concluding our meditation, there is a final thought about Rebekah which we would like to share. When Isaac finally received Rebekah into his tent, he was comforted after his mother's death (verse 67). We have the deeply moving story of the death and burial of Sarah back in chapter 23, and it is clear that the whole episode had greatly upset Isaac. We cannot now go into all the related details and reasons, but the point stressed in our verse is that when Rebekah arrived, Isaac's grief was somehow assuaged. Her entrance into his tent, and into his life, was the comfort and recompense he needed at that time. If we carry all that over into the theme which we have been following, we can say that one of the prime ministries of the church is that she comforts Christ after his far deeper sorrows. No mere human has yet understood the true depths of divine anguish involved in purchasing man's redemption. We can only read that "He who knew no sin was made sin for

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us,â€• but we all fail to comprehend it. We know that the Lord cried out, â€œMy God, My God, why has Thou forsaken Meâ€•, but not one of us can understand the sentence! It is true that God raised Him from the dead, and that itself would have been great recompense, but it would seem now that only the coming of the church to Christ would supply the full comfort needed, and heal the final wound.

The church, then, is to be seen (amongst all other things) as a healing balm for the great strong Christ Himself. While the resurrection and exaltation of the Saviour after all His sufferings would have been recompense unspeakable, the coming of His church, right into His tent, is to be the crowning recompense of all. He shall, in that way too â€œsee of the travail of His soul, and be satisfiedâ€• (Isa. 53:11). We ask now, could anyone ever think of a greater privilege than that, or of a more precious ministry to Him? We say it in a guarded sense that the church is destined to comfort Christ, and to satisfy Him, after all the unspeakable travails involved in our redemption.

We have here only sown a thought. May the blessed Holy Spirit further clarify it, and win our hearts to Christ for ever!