

A Bride for Abraham's Son

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[0:00] Good morning, everyone. Welcome to church to those who are visiting and new. It's lovely to have you with us. My name's Martin. Today we are embarking on our final talk in the series we've been covering on the life of Abraham in the book of Genesis.

This is Genesis chapter 24. It is the longest chapter in the book of Genesis. Actually, it comfortably makes it into the top 10 for longest chapters in the Bible as a whole.

And I've had a couple of trial runs this week in reading through Genesis 24 and it takes 10 minutes. So what I've decided about how we're going to approach it today is we're going to break up the whole chapter into sections.

We are going to read the whole thing and we'll read it bit by bit for us. But we're going to do it in sections as I go through this sermon this morning. I want you to hear the whole story.

One thing that struck me more about Genesis 24, even more than its length, though, is that it is its tone. It's just nice.

[1:07] I mean, it's a pleasant chapter, even delightful. It's not only the longest chapter in Genesis, it's also the most charming chapter in Genesis.

And if you think about the Bible, like a lot of the Bible, there's kind of this dark undercurrent running through much of the stories. But if you think about a lot of what we've read in Genesis so far, again and again, we come across people behaving very poorly.

But reading Genesis 24, you can't really fault anyone. Like everyone seems to behave quite admirably. It feels a bit like, you know, the feel-good story about baby pandas that you get tacked on at the end of the evening news on the TV, right?

You know, you've had all this awful stuff. And then just so you don't leave the TV feeling too depressed, you know, there's this... I mean, is that all it is? Or is there something deeper going on here?

We're going to think about these things. Why is it so long? And why is its tone? What's the reason for this different tone? We're going to think about that later on. In chapter 24, Abraham sets in place a scheme to find a wife for his son Isaac.

[2:20] Now, it might be tempting as we listen to this chapter to kind of read it and seek advice on how we should make decisions in life.

Maybe particularly advice for people who want to seek God's guidance when it comes to finding a spouse. But it isn't given for that reason. If you were to take this chapter as a manual on finding a spouse, you can't just pick and choose the bits you want.

If you want to take this chapter seriously for, you know, spouse-finding advice, then I hope you like arranged marriages and I hope you have a bunch of camels in your backyard. But what we're supposed to see in Genesis chapter 24 is the steadfast love of God at work.

God achieving his promises to bring blessings to all people. So that's where we're heading. But without further delay, let's get into scene 1, verses 1 to 9, Abraham's charge to his servant.

Genesis 24, verses 1 to 9.

[3:38] Now Abraham was old, well advanced in years, and the Lord had blessed Abraham in all things. 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 that I might make you swear by the Lord, the God of heaven and the God of earth, that 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.

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?

Abraham said to him, see to it that you do not take my son back there. 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. 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.

[5:10] So the servant put his hand under the thigh of Abraham, his master, and swore to him concerning this matter. Verse 1 tells us two things about Abraham, that he's old and that he'd been blessed.

Well, let's observe in this first scene the faith of old Abraham. This is two or three years after Sarah's death. Abraham is about 140 at this time.

Half of his long lifetime ago, God had promised to bless Abraham, and God had kept that promise. The Lord had blessed Abraham in all things.

He had protected Abraham, prospered him, given him a son, an heir. But now Abraham turned his thoughts to the next generation. What would happen for his descendants after Abraham was gone? He turned his thoughts to finding a wife for his son Isaac. But not from among the Canaanites.

Abraham was conscious of the threat, the danger of assimilation into the people of the land.

[6:27] No, he wanted to take a wife for his son from his home country, from his kindred, from his extended family. And so he charges, Abraham charged his servant to go and find a wife for his son.

And four things underline the seriousness of this charge. Firstly, there's the one who's entrusted with it. He's the oldest, most senior servant in Abraham's household.

Secondly, there's the intimate physical gesture, placing his hand under Abraham's thigh. Thirdly, there's the requirement for an oath. The servant, Abraham calls on the servant to give an oath that he will do this.

And fourthly, that the oath is to be made by nothing less than, in verse 3, the Lord, the God of heaven and the God of earth. We can hear echoes of Genesis 1 verse 1 there, the God who created all things, heaven and earth.

So Abraham charges his servant to do this. And in verse 5, the servant anticipates a possible hurdle. Perhaps the woman may not be willing to follow me to this land.

[7:37] You'll notice there, for both Abraham and for the servant, that taking a wife for Isaac did not mean kidnapping a wife for Isaac. She must be willing.

Well, Abraham's reply in verses 6 to 8, in his reply, we see the faith of this man who had walked with God for decades.

Gone is the Abraham of Genesis chapter 16, who tried to achieve the promise by his own means.

Gone is the Abraham of Genesis chapter 20, who deceived Abimelech and brought the promise into jeopardy to protect himself.

Now Abraham fully understood that his future, his family's future, the future of God's plan to bless the nations, did not depend on human schemes or power or tricks.

It rested fully on the power and faithfulness of God. And so he says to his servant, he will send his angel before you. The Lord will send his angel before you.

[8:43] When God's promise could not be fulfilled unless Abraham had a son, God had taught Abraham that he could be trusted to provide a son.

Now that God's promise cannot be fulfilled unless the son has a wife, Abraham trusts God to provide a wife. But what if the woman were not willing?

Well, in that case, the servant would be free of his oath. But above all, under no circumstance should any apparent difficulty or hurdle justify disobedience or unbelief.

God had called Abraham to leave his home country. His son must not go back there. God had promised to give this land. His son must not leave it.

Difficulties would be no excuse for disobedience and challenges no excuse for compromise.

Abraham charges his servant, trust God. He will give what he has promised.

[9:45] And when we reach 140, and some of you are a little bit closer than I am, may God give us the faith of old Abraham. When verse 9, the servant swore his oath, which brings us to scene 2, the servant's prayer at the well.

Verse 10 to 14. Then the servant took 10 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. 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.

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

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.

[11:06] 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. So accompanied by 10 camels laden with gifts, the servant set out to the northeast from the land of Canaan.

In verse 10, a journey which would have taken a month or more is passed over without comment.

And the narrative hurries us to Mesopotamia, to the city of Nahor.

Now, Nahor there is either the name of the city or it's also the name of Abraham's brother. So it just might be saying the city where Abraham's brother settled and raised his family.

In verse 11, the servant arrived in the evening outside the city. He and his camels are no doubt thirsty from the journey. They stop at the city's well, but the servant doesn't presume to take water from the well without an invitation.

[12:11] In any case, he's more concerned with his mission than his thirst. And so he comes up with a plan. He springs into action. Actually, he doesn't spring into action.

That might be what I would have done. The first thing he does is pray. He remembers that Abraham had said, the Lord will send his angel before him. And so he prayed.

And you see what his prayer is really about by looking at the beginning and the end of his prayer. There's a specific sort of plan he outlines in it. But at the beginning and the end, he tells us what he's praying for.

What he's praying for is the steadfast love of the Lord. Verse 12 and verse 14. Verse 12. Please grant me success today and show steadfast love to my master Abraham.

He's praying that God would show his loyal, faithful love. Chesed is the steadfast love of the Lord. And the servant's plan itself, which is sort of encompassed in the appeal for steadfast love, is kind of secondary.

[13:18] But the plan itself concerns asking a woman for a drink at the well. And then if the woman will offer also to water the servant's camels. Now, I want you to realise, what we ought to realise here is the difficulty of the test which the servant is posing here for God, in a sense.

Are the servants asking God to show which woman he's chosen? And it would be just a small thing if he were to ask a woman for a drink and the woman gave him a drink.

I mean, any woman's going to do that. That's just an expected, trivial act of hospitality if the woman gave the servant a drink. So the servant poses this much more extreme test, an unlikely test.

If she says, drink and I'll water your camels too, let her be the one you've chosen for your servant Isaac. Now, that would be a very, very unlikely response.

I was doing a bit of research about camels this week. Do you know that camels are the fastest drinkers in the animal kingdom? I mean, because you think of their physiology, like how they're designed.

[14:38] They're designed to be able to take in a lot of water and store it so that they can, if need be, go days without water. But what that means is that when they get to water, they really go for it.

Like, they go to town. They take the opportunity to drink as much as they can. And these camels, remember, had just been on a journey of a month. You know, they would have maybe had some stops for water on the way.

But I think we're certainly to have every reason to expect these camels are quite thirsty. I mean, even if they were only sort of moderately thirsty, they're probably each going to drink about 50 litres of water in a matter of minutes.

If they're very thirsty, they could drink 100, even up to 200 litres of water. And they do it fast.

Camels, I have a friend. And I have a friend who, after a soccer game once on a hot day, he drank too much water too quickly, like three litres or something too quickly.

And he had to go to hospital. Because if you drink too much water too quickly, what it does to a human body is that, like, it thins out your blood too much. And so you get really, you get disoriented, sick, vomiting.

[15:46] It can actually be fatal. But camels have apparently oval-shaped red blood cells that can absorb more water and remain flexible and sort of grow in size.

And so their whole physiology is just designed to be able to just take in water. And here are these 10 thirsty camels that, you know, are going to drink hundreds of litres of water between them.

And a woman coming to the well would have a jar that would, in itself, hold at most 10 litres of water. So offering to water these 10 camels is, I mean, this is going to be making 50, 80, 100 trips to the well and back just to give these camels enough to drink.

So this is a sort of extreme test that the servant is posing here. The kind of response that could only come about, not merely from the woman herself, but by the prompting of God.

And so having laid out this unlikely test, the servant concludes his prayer. By this I shall know that you have shown steadfast love to your master. And so we come to scene three, the servant meets Rebecca.

[17:06] Verse 15 to 28. Before he had finished speaking, behold, Rebecca, 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.

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.

Then the servant ran to meet her and said, please give me a little water to drink from your jar. She said, drink, my lord. And she quickly let down her jar upon her hand and gave him a drink.

When she had finished giving him a drink, she said, I will draw water for your camels also until they have finished drinking. 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. The man gazed at her in silence to learn whether the Lord had prospered his journey or not. When the camels had finished drinking, the man took a gold ring weighing half a shekel and two bracelets for her arms weighing ten gold shekels and said, please tell me whose daughter you are.

[18:40] Is there room in your father's house for us to spend the night? She said to him, I am the daughter of Bethuel, the son of Milcah, whom she bore to Nahor.

She added, we have plenty of both straw and fodder and room to spend the night. The man bowed his head and worshipped the Lord 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. Then the young woman ran and told her mother's household about these things.

Now, as we read through that passage, I wonder, did you notice how the narrative invites us as readers to admire this young woman, Rebecca?

I mean, we read this or hear it and we can't help thinking she really is an impressive young woman. She'd be quite the catch for Isaac. The first thing we're told in verse 15 is that she is from Abraham's extended family.

[20:03] Of course, the servant doesn't know this yet, but she's the granddaughter of Abraham's brother Nahor, which would, I think, make her Isaac's first cousin once removed. So she is, you know, in the required extended family.

Then we're told in verse 16, she's beautiful, very attractive in appearance. She's eligible. She's a maiden. She's unmarried. And she's virtuous. No man had known her. But what really impresses us is her character.

She's respectful, saying, drink, my Lord, in verse 18. She's generous, offering to draw water for his camels. Notice that, draw water for his camels until they have finished drinking.

She's hospitable. When the servant asks if there's room to spend the night, she volunteers in verse 25 that not only is there room, but we have plenty of both straw and fodder as well.

Above all, she's industrious. There's this sense of alacrity to all that she does. Verse 18, she quickly let down her jar. Verse 20, she quickly emptied her jar into the trough.

[21:09] Verse 20, she ran again to the well. Verse 28, she ran back to her mother's household. In the Hebrew text, there's this rapid-fire sequence of verbs to capture all this eager activity.

So what we have here, it's like the scene in a romantic comedy where we see the heroine, you know, like helping out in a soup kitchen and treating everyone with dignity or taking in some stray kittens from the lane behind her apartment or looking after a colleague at work who's been teased by everyone else.

I mean, the narrative could have just shown Rebecca passing the servant's test in a simple matter-of-fact way. Without drawing any attention to anything particularly remarkable about her. Instead, the narrative develops in such a way that it doesn't just suggest that she is the one for Isaac. It makes us want her to be the one for Isaac.

I mean, in this season of The Bachelor, we're team Rebecca. In verse 21, the man gazed at her in silence to learn whether the Lord had prospered his journey or not.

[22 : 24] And in verse 22, when the camels had finished drinking, she did indeed draw water until that had enough. He first indicates, the servant indicates his conclusion by lavishing these extravagant gifts of gold jewellery on her.

And then after learning that she is from Abraham's extended family, the servant worshipped the Lord who has not forsaken his steadfast love and his faithfulness towards my master.

His prayer had been answered. Well, verse 28, the young woman ran and told her mother's household, which brings us to scene four.

And in scene four, we're going to meet another character, Rebecca's brother, Laban. Now, we need to be careful that we don't import back into this chapter things we might know about Laban from later in the book of Genesis.

Because even Laban here, I think, acquits himself quite well by recognising the Lord's blessing on Abraham's servant and by displaying the same hospitality that his sister had offered.

[23 : 34] So, scene four, in the house of Rebecca's mother. From verse 29. Rebecca had a brother whose name was Laban.

Laban ran out towards man. To the spring. As soon as he saw the ring and the bracelets on his sister's arms and heard the words of Rebecca his sister, thus the man spoke to me.

He went to the man and behold, he was standing by the camels at the spring. 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. 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. Then food was set before him to eat. But he said, I will not eat until I have said what I have to say.

[24 : 42] He said, Speak on. So he said, I am Abraham's servant. 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. 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. 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.

But you shall go to my father's house and to my clan and take a wife for my son. I said to my master, Perhaps the woman will not follow me.

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.

[25 : 50] Then you will be free from my oath when you come to my clan. And if they will not give her to you, you'll be free from my oath.

I came today to the spring and said, O Lord, the God of my master Abraham, If now you are prospering the way I go, 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. 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. Before I have finished speaking in my heart, Behold, Rebecca came out with her water jar on her shoulder, And she went down to the spring and drew water.

And I said to her, Please let me drink. 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.

[26 : 56] 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.

Then I bowed my head and worshipped 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 her son.

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.

Then Laban and Bethuel answered and said, The thing has come from the Lord. We cannot speak to you, bad or good.

Behold, Rebecca is before you. Take her and go, And let her be the wife of your master's son, As the Lord has spoken. When Abraham's servant heard their words, He bowed himself to the earth before the Lord.

[28:05] And the servant brought out jewellery of silver and gold and garments, And gave them to Rebecca. He also gave to her brother and to her mother costly ornaments.

And he and the men who were with him ate and drank, And they spent the night there. Now this is the scene where the author's word count really gets out of control.

Whenever I did essays for Bible college or university, The final stage would always be going over the essay with a fine tooth comb, Just trying to trim the content to squeeze it under the word count. If you wanted to do that to Genesis 24, This is the scene you'd be trimming. Well, we looked at this in my Bible study group on Wednesday night. And Ryan pointed out that when the servant eventually gets back to Canaan, In verse 66, It just says, The servant told Isaac all the things he'd done.

So, I mean, This was, That sort of brevity was a narrative technique that this writer was familiar with, And could have used. I mean, Why doesn't he get to Rebecca's household and just say, You know, The servant told them all the things that had happened.

[29:28] Instead, We hear the whole story again. You know, In detail. At parts, Just word for word. Why is that? Well, I think the question to ask, To put that same question another way is, What's the narrative impact of that on us as readers?

To hear this story again, Fleshed out in detail. Did you notice how the story that the servant tells, How it interrupts the fellowship this family is about to share at the table?

The food's been put in front of the servant, But he says, I will not eat until I've said what I have to say. And the eating and drinking only takes place in verse 54, After the story has been told.

It's this interruption. It shows the servant's priorities, What he cares about more. But also, It sort of leaves us hanging in suspense, As this tale is told.

And so that the narrative invites us as readers to hear it again. To hear it again. But now to hear it, With the ears of Rebecca's family, Her mother, Her father, Bethuel, Her brother, Laban, To hear this story told again, Step by step, So that we can conclude, As they do in verse 50, The thing has come from the Lord.

[30:53] We cannot speak to you, Good or bad. In other words, God's behind this. This is God's doing. It's the work of God. And who are we to resist What God is doing?

When the servant tells the story Of the Lord's steadfast love, What can Rebecca's family say? But yes, It's from the Lord.

It's their response to, And if that's their response to even this, This one tiny sliver of God's work, This one little moment in the story of God's steadfast love, How much more should that be the response of us, Who have the whole counsel of scripture?

How much more, We who have not only the beginning of the story Of the Lord's steadfast love, But at the end. If the story of the servant and Rebecca at the well is worth repeating, How much more the story of Jesus And the Samaritan woman at another well?

Or how much more the story of Jesus on the cross? The old, old story of Jesus and his love. When we hear the story of the Lord's steadfast love, What shall we do but say, Yes, it is from the Lord.

[32:26] Actually, there's another layer of what's going on here for Rebecca's family. Because as the servant tells his story of what God has done, They're invited not just to believe what the Lord had done, The story of his steadfast love, But they're also invited to be part of what God was doing.

Verse 51, I'm sorry, verse 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.

Rebecca's family had a part to play As instruments of God's steadfast love, A part that had been scripted for them by the Lord, But a part which they willingly accepted.

Verse 51, Behold, Rebecca is before you. Take her and go, And let her be the wife of your master's son, As the Lord had spoken. And so, In the verses that follow, The steadfast love of the Lord is celebrated, With worship in verse 52, As the servant again bows down and worships the Lord. With precious gifts in verse 53, As the servant brings out bridal gifts for Rebecca, And gifts for Rebecca's family. With food and drink and merriment in verse 54, As the servant and the men with him eat and drink.

[33 : 55] See how the story of the Lord's steadfast love Inspires obedience and celebration and worship.

So the servant and his men, The men who were with him ate and drank and spent the night there, Which brings us to scene five in the morning. From verse 54b, When they arose in the morning, He said, Send me away to my master.

Her brother and her mother said, Let the young woman remain with us for a while, At least ten days. After that she may go. 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. They said, Let us call the young woman and ask her. And they called Rebecca and sent to her, Will you go with this man?

She said, I will go. So they sent away Rebecca, Their sister and her nurse, And Abraham's servant and his men. And they blessed Rebecca 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.

[35 : 25] Then Rebecca and her young women arose and rode on the camels and followed the man. Thus the servant took Rebecca and went his way.

In verse 55, Rebecca's brother and mother make it, I think, Quite a reasonable request. I mean, The servant had come, He'd turned up the previous evening, And now he wants to leave the very next morning.

They met him twelve hours ago, And he's about to take away their sister and their daughter. I mean, This was huge, Right? She's going to a distant place to marry someone they'd never met.

Would they ever see her again? Maybe not. If they did, It would be very rarely. So there's a reasonable request, Ten days or so, Just to spend time with her, To say goodbye, To help her pack and prepare.

Is that too much to ask? But the servant wanted no delay, Since the Lord has prospered my way, He said. So Rebecca's mother and brother called the young woman, To ask her the very question, That had hovered over this story from its beginning.

[36 : 37] Will you go with this man? You know, That's the very possibility, Concerning which the servant had questioned Abraham, Right way back in chapter five, Verse five at the beginning.

Perhaps the woman may not be willing, To go to follow me back to this land. It's an issue he hadn't concealed from the family, When he shared the story the night before, Before the meal.

In verse 39, Saying, I said to my master, Perhaps the woman will not follow me. It was the one circumstance, Under which Abraham offered to release the servant, From his oath.

The one circumstance, Under which the whole mission, To find a wife for Isaac, Might fail. A wife for Isaac, The future of Abraham's family, The promise of God, God's plan to bring blessing, The steadfast love of the Lord, All down to this one moment, Will you go with this man?

Now see how the promise, And blessing of God hinges, At this moment, On the willingness of the one he calls. And she said, I will go.

[37 : 58] And we see what followed immediately. They sent Rebecca away in verse 59, In verse 60, They blessed Rebecca and said to her, Our sister, May you become thousands of ten thousands, And may your offspring, Possess the gate of those, That is your seed, Possess the gate of those, Who hate him.

Singular. Does this scene remind you of anything? Or this blessing, Remind you of anything? It ought to remind us of two things, I think.

It ought to remind us of Genesis chapter 12, Verses one to three, When the Lord had first called Abraham, To leave this very same land, And his family, To go to the land of Canaan, To leave his country, And kindred, And father's house, To go to the land he'd show, And promise to bless him, When he did.

It ought also to remind us, Of Genesis 17, Verse 16 to 18, Where after Abraham had offered his son Isaac, In obedience to God, As a sacrifice, And then God had provided a sacrifice, In his place, The Lord had confirmed, With an oath, The covenant, Saying, I'll surely bless you, I'll multiply your

descendants, As the stars of the heaven, And your seed, Singular, Will possess the gates of his enemies, And in him, All the nations of the earth, Will be blessed.

Now remember, We've got this major section of Genesis, Drawing to a close, The Abraham cycle, Drawing to a close, And as it began, So it's finishing, With God's plan, To bring blessing to all nations, His plans, To bring a saviour, Into the world, Focused on someone, Leaving their country, Leaving their family, To travel to a distant land, See Rebecca here, It's almost like, She's given this extraordinary, Distinction, Of as being portrayed, As a second Abraham, Here in this scene, But even better things await, In verse 61, The camel set out, From Canaan, For Mesopotamia, Set out from Mesopotamia, Back for Canaan, And let's bring this story, To a close with scene six, Verse 62, Now Isaac,

[40 : 22] Isaac had returned, From Beelahiroi, And was dwelling, In the Negev, And Isaac went out, To meditate, In the field, Towards evening, And he lifted up his eyes, And saw, And behold, There were camels coming, And Rebecca lifted up her eyes, And when she saw Isaac, She dismounted from the camel, 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, And the servant told Isaac, All the things that he had done, Then Isaac brought her, Into the tent of Sarah, His mother, And took Rebecca, And she became his wife, And he loved her, So Isaac was comforted, After his mother's death, There's this romantic moment, In verses 63 to 64, Isaac's there meditating in the field, Rebecca's riding in with the camels, Both lift up their eyes, And look, Rebecca sees Isaac, And Isaac sees the camels, I guess if Isaac were alive today, He'd be, You know, Into sports cars or something, But there are really two things, I want you to take from this final scene, Which show, I think, The real significance of this story,

The first is seen in an absence, And a subtle shift, Verse 65, When Rebecca saw Isaac, She asked the servant, Who is that man walking in the field to meet us?

And the servant said, Notice his words, It is my master, Now there are 20, There are 22 previous instances, In this chapter, Which have mentioned, The servant's master, At least the first 20 of them, Unambiguously refer to, Who?

To Abraham, And that's naturally how we read, The two mentions in verse 54 and 56 too, When he says, Send me away to my master, But when he gets back to the land of Canaan, Whom does he call his master?

[42 : 43] Not Abraham, But Abraham's son Isaac, In fact, Abraham himself knows, Is entirely absent from this final scene, Not even mentioned, See we suddenly, Abraham sent out the servant, But the servant returned to Isaac, What we're seeing here, Is God's plan of salvation, Has advanced, From one generation to the next, From Abraham and Sarah, Now to Isaac and Rebecca, But there's a second thing, I want you to notice in this final scene, That's the last verse, See in verse 67, We behold the outcome, Of God's steadfast love, As this chapter presents it, Then Isaac brought her, Into the tent of Sarah his mother, And took Rebecca, And she became his wife, And he loved her, So Isaac was comforted, After his mother's death, Now this is only the second time, In the Bible, That the specific Hebrew word for love,

That's used here occurs, When it says Isaac loved her, The previous one is in chapter 22, Where God calls Isaac the son, Whom Abraham loves, So the first two uses of this word love, In the Bible, Have been a father's love for his son, And the son's love for his bride, But let's think about what chapter 24, Of Genesis has given us, It begins with the mention of, The God of heaven and earth, There's been much talk of blessing, There's been abundance, An abundance of water, An abundance of food, Of gold and silver, There's been evening, And morning, And now the chapter closes, With a wedding, A man leaves his father and mother, To be united to his wife, A woman leaves her father and mother, To be united to her husband, And the two become one, I think it's like this story, Is setting up in narrative form,

A new beginning, Almost a return to Eden, Perhaps that's why this chapter, Is so different in tone, To much of the rest of Genesis, Why it's charming and delightful, And why people behave so well, And then we're told, In the closing words, So Isaac was comforted, After his mother's death, See since Genesis chapter 3, Death has been in the world, But now at last, We read of, Comfort, After death, It's like it's saying, What brings about comfort, In the face of death, Is the steadfast love of the Lord, The story of God's steadfast love, Which he'd begun, Which he'd caused to prosper, Which passes unfailingly, From one generation to the next, That story is God's ultimate answer,

To the fall in Genesis 3, The steadfast love of God, Takes us backward in time, Beyond the tears of Genesis 3, To the joy and delight of Genesis 2, And that picture of, The picture Genesis 24, Leaves us with in verse 67, That picture of Isaac, The son, The heir, Who inherits all things from his father, The focal point of God's, Plan to bless his nations, Isaac the son, Rebecca his bride, Beautiful, Radiant, Willingly his, That picture of the son's love, For his bride, In this picture, We have this little glimpse, This little promise, Of the undoing of sin, Of the defeat of death, By the steadfast love, Of the Lord,

So what better way, Could we bring this series to a close, Than with the greater wedding, To which the wedding of Isaac, And Rebecca, Points, In the words of Revelation 21, Verses 1 before, Then I saw a new heaven, And a new earth, For the first heaven, And the first earth, Had passed away, And the sea was no more, And I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, Coming down, Out of heaven from God, Prepared as a bride, Adorned for her husband, And I heard a loud voice, From the throne, Saying, Behold, The dwelling place of God, Is with man, He will dwell with them, And they will be his people, And God himself, Will be with them, As their God, He will wipe away, [47 : 51] Every tear from their eyes, And death shall be no more, Neither shall there be mourning, Nor crying, Nor pain, Anymore, For the former things, Have passed away, Amen.