

9078

ISAAC, WE BRETHREN, AS ISAAC WAS, ARE CHILDREN OF PROMISE

Speaker: Bro. J. Cowie

Study #3: Comforted after his mother's death

Reading: Genesis 24

Thanks bro. Tim. Well, brethren and sisters and young people, if I was to say to you that I had been sent on a mission from Brisbane to come to Adelaide, and to ask for some willing young people, who would return with me next Tuesday, God willing, back to Brisbane to become partners for some single young people that we have at home, and that the moment you arrive, there will be a wedding held at the Wilston hall, and you will have a partner immediately sight unseen! I don't think we would need to hire a 45 seat bus to take back the volunteers, true? How many of you would want a partner that you'd never seen? Well, that's what happens in this chapter! What was it that motivated Rebekah to return with Abraham's servant, to become the wife of Isaac? She had a choice, it was in her hands; it wasn't as though she was compelled to go, she went willingly! Ever thought about that? you've really sat down and contemplated what it was that motivated this woman, who could have had any man in her home town? She was in great demand, as we shall see in a moment, but she was prepared to go with a perfect stranger for some considerable distance, a distance which could not be bridged, and was not bridged again in her entire life, to marry a man she'd never seen!

B&S and young people, when we take it a step up to the higher level, to the allegorical level, that's the exact position we all are if we are part of the bride of Christ! If we've been espoused unto one Husband and we are waiting for Him, the situation in which we find ourselves is identical to that in which Rebekah found herself. All we have is a message brought by a messenger, perhaps in one form or another, which gives us an impression of the One who awaits to take us as His bride! It's a matter of being prepared to go willingly, sight unseen!

That's the point the apostle Peter makes in 1 Peter 1 verse 8, (I think it says), he says, 'Who having not seen you loved', he's talking about the bride in all lands, who waits with anticipation for the day when they shall be taken into the company of her husband who, having not seen, they loved. Why do they love Him? Well, of course, it's all upon the basis of the information that they have concerning Him and His Father! And that's exactly what happens in this chapter. Now we need, I think, now we need, I think, just to bring these two chapters together; we concluded our study last evening on Genesis 22, and we saw a marvellous allegory building up in Genesis 21 and into 22; we saw in that chapter, of course, the great sacrifice that was made by a father and a son working so wonderfully together, as they went, both of them together, to the hill of Golgotha, and there the sacrifice was made that brought about the covenant which Yahweh had made

with Abraham. And when we came to verse 19 of Genesis 22, that Abraham returned unto his men, and they rose up and went together to Beer-sheba, and there was no mention of Isaac; and apart from the fact that he's married, of course, in the 24th chapter as being the subject of the servant's search for a bride, and that, you might say, is incidental to what's happening. Isaac himself does not reappear in the record until the end of chapter 24; and so, of course, the record is setting forth very clearly an allegory: That our Lord Jesus Christ having accomplished the great sacrifice, guaranteeing the fulfilment of the covenant, resurrected from the dead like Isaac was received from the altar in a figure, (Hebrews 11:19), Paul tells us that Abraham received his son as it were, by resurrection from the dead, as he got off that altar, this one now, b&s, has disappeared from the record, because it is as though he's ascended to heaven. And he doesn't make another appearance until he comes to take a bride.

Well, between chapters 22 and 24, of course, there's the 23rd chapter which records the death of Sarah and her burial in the cave of Machpelah; and we believe that this is also part of this allegory, for in the absence of our Lord Jesus Christ, b&s and young people, there came that time when the polity of Zion, that is those things that had to do with the politics or the commonwealth of Israel centred in Zion, came to an end, as the heavens were rolled up as the prophet Isaiah says in the 51st chapter. And the commonwealth of Israel was overthrown by the Roman invasion in AD.70, we believe that's prefigured in the death and burial of Sarah (we'll a bit more about Sarah and Zion in a moment). And we come, therefore, to the 24th chapter and we see, of course, the sending forth of ambassadors, who seek for a bride for Isaac in Gentile lands, just as the apostles have gone forth, after the ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ, and after AD.70 into all lands, that they might seek a bride for the son of God. And the time comes, at the end of the chapter, when the marriage is celebrated and there is, of course, the prospect now of a multitudinous seed in Zion's tent! or as the record says, Sarah's tent.

Now it behooves us, I think, at this point, to make the connection between Sarah and Zion, palatably clear to us all. And to do that we need to come to the prophecy of Isaiah, Isaiah 51 first of all, and this transparency which I have behind me on the allegory of the two covenants which was put up last evening. You see in the top right hand corner, under the name Sarah that, of course, she represents as far as the apostle Paul was concerned in Galatians 4, the new covenant, in counter distinction to Hagar who represents the old or Mosaic covenant. And Sarah is symbolized by Mount Zion, she is as the apostle says, 'the Jerusalem which is above, which is free, the mother of us all', and as you explore the scriptures, it becomes very obvious, especially in the prophecy of Isaiah, but elsewhere as well, that Sarah is set forth as a type or representation of Zion. And Zion in the prophecy is set forth as a type of the wife (or the bride) of Yahweh, through whom He would produce children. In Isaiah 51 we read this in verse 1, 'Hearken to me, ye that follow after righteousness, ye that seek Yahweh: look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged (in other words, Yahweh is digging wells; just keep that one in mind, because it will come up again in another study). Look unto Abraham your father, (and we've seen that Abraham was the delegated father, who on Yahweh's behalf would be the father of the faithful to produce the multitudinous seed through a son), and then he says, 'look unto Sarah that bare

you: for I called him alone, and blessed him, and increased him'. Now, we normally stop there, but we shouldn't stop there, but we should continue to read on, because you see, we are actually told in verse 3 who Abraham and Sarah represent in the allegory.

Verse 3 says, 'For Yahweh shall comfort Zion: He will comfort all her waste places; and He will make her wilderness like Eden', etc, and it goes on to speak then of the gathering in of the Gentiles (you'll pick that up from verse 4 and 5). He says at the end of verse 4, 'I will make my judgment to rest for a light of the peoples (plural). My righteousness is near; my salvation is gone forth, and mine arms shall judge the peoples; the isles (always, of course, a reference to the Gentiles) shall wait upon Me, and on mine arm shall they trust'. And then in verse 6, we have in fact, the wrapping up, or the abolition, of the Mosaic system in the language that is used there, and the chapter goes on to speak about the redeemed coming to Zion, verse 11, 'Therefore the redeemed of Yahweh shall return, and come with singing unto Zion' (because, you see, Zion is their mother! and Yahweh is their Father)! Well, we've got that connection in verses 2 and 3 between Yahweh and Abraham to whom He delegated His fatherhood, and Zion and Sarah who, in the scheme of things, is there to represent Yahweh's bride through whom He would produce children, but for whom there has been a time of dismissal from His house. And while she is absent from her place, Yahweh is continuing to produce children by her! That's why when you go on in the prophecy of Isaiah, Isaiah 54 (we referred to this reference the other day) verse 1, 'Sing O barren, thou that didst not hear; break forth into singing, and cry aloud, thou that didst not travail with child; (that was the position of Sarah, wasn't it?) for more are the children of the desolate (remember the words of Sarah as she held Isaac and dandled him upon her knees as Isaiah 66 suggests) who would have said that Sarah would have borne unto Abraham children (plural)?' because she saw that through this one would come the multitude that had been promised. And it goes on to speak in verse 2, 'of the need to enlarge the place of her tent; to let them stretch forth the curtains of thine habitations: spare not, lengthen thy cords' (you need more room, Zion, because your children are going to be very numerous). 'For thou shalt break forth, (verse 3), on the right hand and on the left; and thy seed shall inherit the Gentiles, and make the desolate cities to be inhabited'. And as you go through the prophecy of Isaiah, time and time again that kind of language is used.

It's there in chapter 49 where Zion is represented as saying, as her children are brought to her in the final day, 'who hath begotten me these?' In her absence Yahweh continued to produce children! She didn't know them, but she will come to know them. In Isaiah 66 we read this in verse 7, 'Before she travailed, she brought forth; before her pain came she was delivered of a man child. Who hath heard such a thing? who hath seen such things? Shall the earth be made to bring forth in one day? or shall a nation be born at once? for as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children' (speaking, b&s, of the time when Zion's children will be revealed to her, and she will not know them). We read in verse 10, words that are picked up from the record of Genesis 21, where Sarah said, 'all that hear thereof, shall rejoice with me', look what verse 10 of Isaiah 66 says! 'Rejoice ye with Jerusalem, and be glad with her, all ye that love her: rejoice for you with her, all ye that mourn for her' (and goes on to speak then, of the bringing in of the

Gentiles). And then in verse 13 we read (perhaps at the end of verse 12 it says) 'Ye shall be borne upon her sides, and be dandled upon her knees. As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you; and ye shall be comforted in Jerusalem'. It's for that reason, b&s and young people, that Psalm 87 speaks about Zion being our mother. I'm sure that most of us are quite familiar with that psalm. Each one, it says, who is part of the bride of that day, the accepted, when Yahweh writes up the people, it says, 'each man will have been counted to have been born in Zion' because they have seen Zion as their mother!

Now, I started this way because as our title suggests, as we come tonight to look at Isaac and the taking of a bride for Isaac, there was a very real need for that in his life, because even 3 years after the death of Sarah, Isaac was grieving the loss of his mother. I guess to be honest, there wouldn't be that many who would grieve quite like that! Every evening, it appears, he would go out and he would quietly contemplate the enormous gaping hole that had been left in his life since Sarah his mother had died. And in sorrowful meditation he would go to the well of Lahai-roi, and there was a reason for his choice of that place, it was not just because he wanted it to be a difficult name to read. There was a reason for the choice of Lahai-roi, for there he felt as close to the Father in heaven as it was possible for him to feel; and there in that place he would pour out his heart in prayer, and intensive musings about the loss that he had experienced. This is 3 years after Sarah has died, and the record says 'that when Rebekah was brought to him, and he took her into his mother Sarah's tent', (he could have taken her into his own tent, but he didn't, he took her into Sarah's tent, it says, with enormous sensitivity), and Isaac was comforted after his mother's death'. That, of course, has a lot of things to say on a personal level, and we'll try and bring some of that out, but it's also got a lot to say about the way, b&s, that our Lord Jesus Christ feels. He feels the same way as His Father feels, about the situation that is befallen Zion, the mother of us all. The only alleviating factor, of course, is that Zion's children are being multiplied! As the apostles went forth, a work was begun which is going on still to this day, as the seed of Zion, the children of Zion, are being multiplied in the earth, and the joyous day will come, when our Lord Jesus Christ will come to take His bride, and He will take her, as it were, into His mother's tent, and He will be comforted after the awful events that He oversaw in AD.70 and since that time, as Zion and her people, the natural seed of Abraham, have suffered enormously at the hands of the Gentiles.

That's the story we have before us tonight! There are many important lessons in here for young people and for older people as we shall see! And so as we go back to the record of Genesis 23, we find the death of Sarah. We're not going to consider this at any length, but we just need to look at that scene, and while we have not read it tonight, I'm sure that many of you are familiar with that chapter. Have you ever wondered why, (and I guess it will be easy to answer this question now), that Isaac who must have been there, when Sarah was laid to rest (you see what it says in verse 19 of Genesis 23), 'And after this Abraham buried Sarah his wife in the cave of the field of Machpelah, before Mamre; the same is Hebron in the land of Canaan'. She must have been buried in the company of both Abraham and Isaac, certainly that picture of the artist's impression has Isaac there; but he's not mentioned. Interesting that, isn't it? It's as

though he's absent, I think that's extremely interesting. The allegory, b&s and young people, is precise! The record wants us to see Isaac in a special role; that's why we're only seeing certain glimpses, although the time will come when we'll get an entire chapter about him! Genesis 26, which will be our subject, I think, for Saturday, we're going to see some marvellous things about this man's personal life; but for the time being the scripture is telling us only so much as it wants us to know!

But then, we come to chapter 24, and we find Abraham, who is now 140 years of age, well-stricken, as it says, in age, sets out to find a wife for his son. And he gives certain important instructions to his servant, which we believe to be Eliezer. Now it's interesting that Eliezer is not actually named, his name means 'El is my help' (Strong's - 499), and that is certainly fulfilled in this chapter. But the reason, I believe, that he's not named is that he is there to represent a class of ambassadors or agents, he is there to represent those who go forth in the preaching of the gospel, and when you look at the allegory, we have, of course, Abraham as we have seen who is the father, we have Sarah, Zion, the mother of us all, Isaac obviously the son, the bridegroom, Rebekah who is clearly set forth as a type of the bride of Christ, and Eliezer and the servants of Abraham who go with him, the apostles and others who carry forth the gospel message into Gentile lands, and it is into Gentile lands that they do proceed. Why would they go there? Well, you might recall that when we read Genesis 22 last evening, that that chapter concludes with several verses, from verses 20 to 24, which appear to be a little out of place. Genesis 22 verse 20 says, 'It came to pass after these things (that is the sacrifice of Isaac) that it was told Abraham saying, behold, Milcah she also hath born children unto Nahor thy brother', and then the sons are listed off. And there are 12 of them! because here we have as it were, the Israel of God in Gentile lands, and this is all happening in the wake of the sacrifice of Christ, and the confirmation of the covenant, and the promise that Yahweh would multiply Abraham's seed immensely, as the sand which is upon the seashore, and that in him and his seed would all nations of the earth would be blessed. Isn't it interesting that the record would just pop in there this information received concerning the family of Abraham, through his brother in a Gentile land. And it was from amongst those that a bride was to be found for his son, Isaac.

And so he gives certain instructions to Eliezer: and 'Abraham said unto his eldest servant of his house' (which strongly suggests that it is Eliezer) that ruled over all that he had, Put, I pray thee, thy hand under my thigh'. He's just buried his wife, and you know what, b&s, the things he's going to say now have to do with some very important principles that the apostle Paul takes hold of in Hebrews chapter 11. And I think we should lay the foundation before we actually proceed into Abraham's words, because he's going to lay down the principles that should govern the selection of marriage partners and certainly should govern the establishment and consolidation of marriage. He wants us to know, that in a selection of a bride for his son, there were certain principles that could not and would not be overlooked. He insisted that those principles had to stand, even though Eliezer suggested that it might not be possible to achieve what he said he had to do. Didn't matter! they were inflexible principles, and we're going to see in a moment that they are very important to us as well.

And I guess there probably would be a few people in this hall tonight, who are either on the threshold of finding a partner in life or perhaps are not that far away from it. And I know, we've been saying these things for a long time, and I still get it coming back to me, 'You keep on talking about these three principles that need to be recognized in the selection of a partner, but it doesn't work that way, Jim!' Well, all I can tell you is this, my experience, my own personal experience and my observation tells me this, that however a relationship begins, one thing is certain, it will not succeed when these principles are ignored! We need to get them right. You know, in Hebrews chapter 11, immediately after the record of Sarah and her faith, there's a little verse popped in there; Paul hasn't finished with the patriarchs by any means, but he just pops a verse in, immediately after referring to Sarah, and back in the record of Genesis 23 and 24 of course, we've got the death and burial of Sarah. It's verse 13, and you'll notice that verse 12 makes reference to the promise of Genesis 22, and Abraham's seed being 'as the stars of the sky and the sand of the sea, innumerable!'; and then he says in verse 13 of Hebrews chapter 11, 'These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth'. Now there are 3 principal verbs in that verse, they are the words, persuaded, embraced and confessed. The word 'persuaded' of course, means 'to be convinced', but when you look up the original Greek, you find it in the Greek that word is in the passive voice (3982) and the passive voice means that you are in fact the recipient of an action being done by someone else. Someone does something to or for you. When you come to the next word, 'embraced', the word 'embraced' actually means 'to enfold in the arms and to hold to oneself' (782). It has, of course, a very clear moral tinge, an emotional tinge to it, hanging on to someone, embracing them as partners would embrace in marriage. That word happens to be in the middle voice, and the middle voice in the Greek language is where you do something to or for yourself. When you come to the next word, 'confessed' means to 'speak out, to acknowledge your assent by speech' (3670), it's actually talking about an action, and it happens to be in the active voice. You see, what we're being told in this verse, b&s and young people, is that life in the truth revolves around a process which could be summarized in three words, mental, moral, physical; that's how sin came into the world. The mind was first corrupted, and then the morality, of course, was corrupted and the eyes were closed and then there were evil deeds. The declination was mental, moral, physical, and when Yahweh set out to redeem the race, He set out to reverse what had happened by using the same process, but of course, getting men's minds back to where they belong! By taking control of their thinking, and then of their deeper morality, their feelings, their emotions, their desires, and then getting them to walk in His ways. Of course, it is an automatic process, isn't it? if the mind and the thinking is right, and it ought to affect the heart and the feelings; and if those things are right it should be automatic, that we'll walk in the right way!

Well, that principle, of course, which is fundamental to the truth, also has it's application to marriage. Marriages ought to be based upon those principles, there ought to be a unity of thinking right up front. As two people come together, how could they walk together except they be agreed? How can their relationship succeed unless their minds are together on the issues that are important? and, How can their relationship succeed

unless they both love the truth, and their God, more than they love each other? One thing that I can tell you is that the physical which is where most men and women in the world begin, in the process of finding partners, the physical doesn't work like it ought! without the mental and the moral. As bro. Thomas describes those who act like animals, all they get is what animals get, and even that turns out to be gravel in their mouth! So you see, b&s and young people, there are some very important and fundamental principles involved here. And what the apostle is saying, as he looks at the patriarchs, there was laid down the divine pattern for redemption, and those principles flow off into every way of life that has to be lived in the truth; and, of course, the way in which that is emphasized in verse 13, the patriarchs were persuaded of the promises, that's something that God did for them; He spoke to them, He preached to them, all they did was to believe! That's exactly what Eliezer is going to do as he goes forth to find a bride for Isaac, because you see, b&s, the next step requires our personal involvement! You can be spoken to or preached to or appealed to, but nobody, nobody can make you put out your arms and embrace the truth. Nobody can make you put out your arms to embrace a partner that you don't want to take; that's a decision that you must make for yourself, that's why it's in the middle voice. And so we see how important the principles are that Abraham is to laid down.

We come back to Genesis 24, and quite apart from the obvious principle that appears in verse 3 of Genesis 24, he's going to lay down the principles by which the bride of Christ are to be selected. You see that it says at the end of verse 2, that the servant was to put his hand under Abraham's thigh; the word 'thigh' there, 'yarek'(3409) meaning 'to be soft', that is, the inner part of the thigh, and though it's perhaps a bit sensitive, he's actually talking about the generative organs of the human body by which children are produced. And the reason for that is, that the issues here are about the development of the seed of Abraham, the multitudinous seed, they are critical issues and, therefore, the oath is to be taken identified with that portion of the body. He says, 'I will make thee swear by Yahweh, the God of heaven, and the God of the earth', why would he say that? Well, of course, he's bringing together here the family of God in heaven and in earth, and he's making the point, isn't he? as we're going to see in a moment (you just turn over to verse 7 where he says towards the end of the verse, 'He shall send His angel before thee'), he's actually making the point, b&s, that in the formation of the bride of Christ, in the development of the multitudinous seed of Abraham, we have a divine work! and Yahweh's family in heaven, the Elohim, are sent forth to minister to those who shall be heirs of salvation, and they're involved in the development of that seed. They are there in the process of the calling, perhaps they are there in the development of the character; to be sure, they are there, b&s, in the work that goes on to augment that seed.

And so, Abraham recognizes that fact as he calls upon Yahweh, the God of heaven and the God of earth; and he lays down a very simple principle that 'thou shalt not take a wife unto my son (my family builder) of the daughters (1121) (the ben) the family builders of the Canaanites among whom I dwell'. You can't get a simpler principle than that! that in looking for a partner in life, young people, you do not look outside the truth! that's as simple as it is, you marry in the truth; we teach our 5 and 6 year olds that,

maybe even younger. So if you ask our children what the fundamental rule of life is, is that when you get to the age of looking for a partner you don't marry outside the truth, and Abraham lays that principle down immediately, 'thou shalt not take a wife unto my son of the daughters of the Canaanites amongst whom I dwell. But thou shalt go unto my country, and to my kindred, and take a wife unto my son Isaac'. Now that phrase 'my son' occurs 8 times in this chapter, so it's laboured, MY SON, ISAAC! Verse 5, 'And the servant said unto him, Peradventure the woman will not be willing to follow me unto this land: must I needs bring thy son again unto the land from whence thou camest?' Now here we have, the first of the important principles for the bride! She must be willing to follow me unto this land; as I said, b&s and young people, you can preach to someone, you can teach people, you can educate your children, you can do everything in your power to make sure that their mind thinks the right way, but at the end of the day, it all comes back to their own personal willingness to do the right thing! There's no way that any part of the bride of Christ will be there because someone got them in an arm lock and said, 'You're coming back to the land!' It's not going to happen that way! there's got to be a willingness!

So, there are going to be principles here, and they're the principles of our calling, and they're very clear principles. The first principle listed on the transparency there is: 1. that God's Son can never abdicate His position.

Now we're going to find that in verse 6, because, having said in verse 5, maybe she won't be willing (Eliezer says, well, maybe I've got to bring him back to that land). And Abraham immediately fires back and says in verse 6, 'beware that thou bring not my son thither again'. And so he lays down a very important principle, that Isaac is not to go back to the land from whence Abraham had come. What's that saying to me and you in simple terms? Well, in simple terms it's saying, that once you're in the truth you can't go back out there! Yes, but it's also saying this, in the allegory it's saying this, that the Son of God having got to where He is now, is never going to abdicate His position to come down to our level so we can have it our way. He's never going to abdicate the position that the Father has placed Him in! We have got to go to Him, we've got to rise to His level, we've got to work, b&s, that we might come up to Him! Abraham makes it very clear unto his servant that there would be no compromise on that point, and it's said again at the end of verse 8, 'and if the woman will not be willing to follow thee, then thou shalt be clear from this my oath, only bring not my son thither again'. So those two things, the fact that Isaac was not to leave that land, he was not to go back to the place from whence Abraham came; and the fact that the bride had to be willing to come from where she was, into the land of promise, that there the marriage might take place, are fundamental principles of the marriage. And, of course, we know from places like Psalm 45 and others, that the bride of Christ will have that as one of her predominant characteristics, the fact that she was prepared to forsake her father's house, to leave behind the world, to repudiate its ways, and to come to the bridegroom.

Now, I guess, we could go on here and do a lot of verse by verse consideration, but given that we're not going to have time to do that, I'm going to just pick the 'I's' out of this chapter now, so that we give ourselves time to look at the end of the chapter. What



we've got in verses 7 through to 9, is Abraham expressing his faith that Yahweh will be involved in this transaction. And he emphasizes over again, the point that the land into which they'd been brought and which had been promised unto his seed, was to be the land where Isaac would remain. And he says in verse 7 that, 'Yahweh God of heaven which took me from my father's house, and from the land of my kindred, and which spake unto me, He shall send His angel before thee'. Do you see what Abraham's mind is doing? Yahweh the God of heaven shall send His angel before thee, so he saw the intervention of heaven as being an extremely important factor in the development and the winning of a bride for his son.

And so, we see that Eliezer puts his hand under his master's thigh in verse 9 and goes on his way. And verses 10 to 14, we have him coming to the city of Nahor, 'the snorer', (5152) as his name means, in Mesopotamia; and he made his camels to kneel down at the well in the evening when the women would come out to draw water. It's the obvious place to be, of course, it's a public place and he is here to find a bride for Isaac, the same way, of course, as the apostles went forth, they went to public places, that they might there preach in the hope of finding a bride for Christ. But Eliezer is to learn the efficacy of prayer.

I want you to follow this next little section, I want you to think hard about the qualities of Eliezer, because you see, b&s and young people, in answer to the question with which we began, who of you would be prepared to go to marry a perfect stranger sight unseen? The answer comes in the behaviour of Eliezer, the servant of Abraham. Now, I believe, it's one of the most important points in this chapter, you look at this man, verse 12, 'And he said, O Yahweh God of my master Abraham, I pray thee, send me good speed this day, and show kindness unto my master Abraham. Behold, I stand here by the well of water; and the daughters of the men of the city come out to draw water: And let it come to pass' (and so he goes on and makes his request), 'the girl that comes out and offers to give water to me and my camels, let her be the one that has been chosen'. In other words, the basis of the selection is to be a willing submission, a willing submission and a desire to sacrifice on the part of the bride. He hasn't even finished speaking, and out comes Rebekah, and this man, as we often, I guess, have seen or maybe even experienced, that when God wants to work quickly, and He doesn't always do so, but when He wants to work quickly, it is awe-inspiring at the speed and the way in which things can turn out. It's awe-inspiring, and we're left sometimes staggered with our jaw hanging on the ground, that it can be happening quite so quickly as this! That's what happens here, 'And it came to pass before he had done speaking, that Rebekah is there on the spot'; she's got her pitcher on her shoulder, of course, the symbol of responsibility, the pitcher being a symbol of her labour; and she is the daughter of Bethuel.

And so, we find that the damsel, verse 16, that comes out was very fair to look upon, and we're going to see in her a very real type of the bride of Christ. But you need to read carefully verse 16, b&s, and especially young people; you need to read it carefully! The damsel was very fair to look upon, a virgin, (you would expect a woman who was to be a type of the bride of Christ, to be a virgin) as the apostle says in 2 Corinthians 11

verse 2, 'I have espoused you as a chaste virgin unto Christ'. That's got to be a characteristic of the bride, doesn't it? But look what it then says, 'neither had any man known her'. Now why would you add that? If she's a virgin, she's a virgin! nobody's touched her, so why add the words, 'neither had any man known her'? Well, it's suggesting, isn't it? that somebody, some men had tried! I pondered whether or not, b&s and young people, we would actually really talk about what this is saying on the personal level, and I decided it would be remiss of me not to say something, given that we are almost in 1997, and that we are living in a world that is full of moral filth and promiscuity; a world that is broadcasting in every form of media right from the rock and roll songs on the radio down to the filthiest products on celluloid or video tape, right across the whole spectrum, especially through the medium of TV, where it's almost impossible to find any program that is designed for so-called adults that is not absolutely full of iniquity of one kind or another. I challenge anyone to find me any book, any program, anything that's been written for adult audiences today, that doesn't have in it, promiscuity, fornication, adultery, sodomy, and things like that! The world is full of it, and they're proud of it, and they are pumping as hard as they can go every form of filth into the minds of the populace. And don't kid yourselves that it's not affecting our community. It's affecting every single one of us, and it's especially affecting our young people. And my great fear is that our young people today are growing up in a society where these things are just accepted as normal; where at least in my day, though the school yard was filthy, it wasn't regarded as normal! But today it is, and there is enormous pressure coming upon our young people, they've done research and they've found that a very high percentage (and I couldn't recall or find the article), but it was a very high percentage of 14 year old school girls had lost their virginity, given it away almost as if it was some kind of badge to be worn; in fact, those who had not done so said that they felt embarrassed that they had retained their virginity! Now, b&s and young people, let's not fool ourselves that the pressures upon our young people are any less than what they are upon the young people in the world. They mix at school, you have the advantage here of having a different alternative; but they mix at school with children who talk almost non-stop about all sorts of movies, and movie stars, and so-called important people, all of whom, or most of whom, are corrupt in their behaviour, and are placarded and broadcast in every form of media; and every now and then, it becomes evident that the world has won in the lives of some!

Here was a girl who had been approached perhaps many times; she was one of the most beautiful girls in the town. When it says there in verse 16, 'she was very fair to look upon' (2896) the words literally mean, 'very fair of form', but through all that she had clung tenaciously to her virginity, it was sacrosanct! I have several daughters, one of whom hopes to be married in the coming year; as parents we have felt an enormous responsibility to impress upon them the need to beware of the nature that we have; we know too much about it by our own personal experience. There is a need for us parents to understand the difficulties that our young people face, and to encourage them, and to instruct them, to seek to work with them, that they might not have the blot that can only undermine the happiness of their marriage.

Here was a girl who could go into her marriage without that blot! She was a quality girl

amongst a people who were anything but a quality people. There are some lessons in that, aren't there? Now I must admit to you that I hate talking about those sort of things. I've tried to be sensitive in what I've said, but there it is in the record, you can have it at the personal level, you can have it at the allegorical level, the lesson is the same, there is a need for us, b&s and young people, to be extremely sensitive to the importance of retaining our purity, our spiritual virginity as it were, and doing that at the personal level, at the bottom end, in our own individual lives, in our dealings one with the other.

And the servant, verse 17, ran to meet her as she went down to get the water in her pitcher, he asked for a drink, and that young woman, b&s, began to go up and down those stairs to give water to the 10 camels after she had given Eliezer, and those that were with him, drink. Ten camels! they drink gallons of water at a time (what ever that might be in litres) it would be like being on at a service station and being the sole attendant, and 10 Kenilworth trucks turning up all together, and saying, 'fill us up!' Hard work, and here's a young woman who's prepared, sight unseen, never saw this man before, to labour diligently to provide him with water. It was the sign he'd asked for! and now it had been fulfilled. 'And the man wondering at her held his peace', it says, 'to wit whether Yahweh had made his journey prosperous or not'. He was astonished that it could happen so quickly; he brings out a golden earring and bracelets for her hands, symbols here of faith, of course, gold the symbol of a tried faith and the ear a symbol of hearing, and so there is, of course, symbolically there, the process of education in the higher sense.

He finds out she's the daughter of Bethuel, the son of Milcah, in verse 24, and he's beside himself, b&s and young people, and an invitation is given to come home and to settle down, there's plenty of room. Can you capture this scene in your mind? Here's the girl still huffing and puffing from running up and down the stairs, here's the servant of Abraham standing there absolutely astonished that it's all happening so quickly and he gets the information that, in fact, here is a girl from the family of Abraham's brother. What he does in verse 26, 'the man bowed down his head, and worshipped Yahweh', (when was the last time that you saw a brother bow his head in the presence of someone with whom he was conversing to give thanks to his God?), ever seen that! it's not like us to do that, is it? Can you imagine the impact that this had upon Rebekah? Have you ever thought about that? Here she is standing there in front of this man, and all of a sudden he's bowing his head and giving glory to God. And it happens again: if you turn the page to chapter 24 and verse 50, 'Then Laban and Bethuel answered and said, The thing proceedeth from Yahweh: we cannot speak unto thee bad or good. Behold, Rebekah is before thee, take her, and go, and let her be thy master's son's wife, as Yahweh hath spoken'. He's just told them all the things that's happened, he's recounted the story all over again, have you ever wondered why Genesis 24 is so long? and why it repeats the same message over and over again? We get the story and then, when Eliezer comes into the house, he tells it all over again! ever wonder why? Well, in the allegory, b&s, it represents the preaching of the gospel; it's telling us that the apostles who were sent forth would say the same thing over and over again, and wherever they went they'd tell the same story!

And there's a response, even Laban, of course, who as uncle John once said, had a

mind like a cash register, even he was impressed by the quality of the man before him. And we read in verse 52, 'that it came to pass when Abraham's servant heard their words, he worshipped Yahweh, bowing himself to the earth'. Here he is, he's in the house now and he's got a whole company around him and he's just told them the story. And when they say, 'Yes', we can see that the hand of God is in all this, in fact, it's obvious that that's the case, clearly Rebekah is before thee, you can take her'; he's overwhelmed by this and he's on his face on the ground bowing to the earth and they're all standing there watching him. Do you get that picture in your mind? and there's a young woman standing there, b&s and young people, who's already seen this a little earlier that day! And do you know what she's saying in her mind, as she watches this man with his head towards the ground speaking in his heart to his God, do you know what she's saying? She's saying this, 'I don't know Isaac, I've never seen him before, but if he's anything like this man, then I'm going to marry him!' That's what she's saying, she knew the qualities of Isaac from the behaviour of Eliezer.

And it's exactly the same, b&s, at the higher level in the allegory. It was the apostle Paul who could say, 'be ye followers of me even as I also am of Christ', and I'll tell you what impressed me as a young person; what impressed me was that there were people beyond my age, whether they were in the young people's group or beyond, there were people beyond my age who I could see not only believed the truth, but lived it and loved it and had a personal relationship with God, and I could see it! It wasn't because they were ostentatious in their display of it, and Eliezer wasn't ostentatious, that was just the way he behaved, that was him; and b&s and young people, especially the older ones amongst us, and the older young people, never underestimate the impact that you can have in your behaviour and your demeanour upon those who are younger. 'Be ye followers of me, the apostle could say, even as I am also of Christ', and here was one who could go forth as an ambassador both of Abraham and Isaac, and bring back a bride.

And the record tells us that the time came when her brother and mother said in verse 55, 'Let the damsel abide with us a few days (you can cross out 'a few' and cross out the marginal reference as well, that's not correct, the record should say, 'with us days') at least ten', (doesn't seem like an unreasonable request does it?) 'after that she shall go'. But Eliezer would have none of it! He said, 'Hinder me not, seeing Yahweh has prospered my way; send me away that I may go to my master'. This is the result of experiencing providential guidance, b&s, he could see the hand of God at work, and they had acknowledged it; he was not now going to put roadblocks in the way of it. And they said, Okay, we will call the damsel and enquire at her mouth. And they thought she'd say 'yes, I'll stay here with you for a little while', and, of course, they were probably hopeful that maybe she'd change her mind. We don't know, but they called Rebekah, verse 58, and said unto her, 'Will you go with this man? And she said with a firm voice, I WILL GO! I WILL GO, I've never seen this man, Isaac, but I will go, If he's anything like this man, I'll marry him!

And they sent Rebekah away, verse 59, and her nurse. And they blessed Rebekah, verse 60, and said unto her, 'Thou art our sister, be thou of thousands of millions and let

thy seed possess the gate of those which hate them'. Where did they get that from? Well, obviously, Eliezer had preached the gospel, hadn't he? the gospel that had been preached to Abraham had now been preached to them, and they were using the language of the promises, 'be thou of thousands of millions, or as the word is, 'myriads', literally it should be rendered perhaps, 'become a family of myriads; and let thy seed possess the gate of those which hate them'. Straight from Genesis 22 verse 17. 'And Rebekah arose and her damsels and they rode upon the camels and followed the man and the servant took Rebekah and went his way'. And they arrived at the time when Isaac came from the way of the well Lahai-roi; for he dwelt in the south country' (we'll say more about Lahai-roi in our next study).

He was there for a special reason, verse 63, 'Isaac went out to meditate in the field at the eventide', now that word 'meditate' there means 'to muse pensively' (7878) it's actually sorrowful meditation, and here, three years after the death of his mother, he's out there, sorrowfully meditating in the presence of his God. 'He lifted up his eyes, and saw, and behold, the camels were coming. And Rebekah lifted up her eyes, and when she saw Isaac, she got down from the camel' (as a mark of respect). Now, what we've got here, in fact, in this record, are the governing principles of the marriage. And they match exactly the principles that the apostle Paul expressed in Hebrews 11 verse 13. The principles that Abraham had impressed upon his servant; and, b&s and young people, for the principles that apply to the selection of the bride of Christ. There was faith in the mental arena, there was complete conviction that God was at work; we've seen that, we know God's at work. There was love for the unseen bridegroom, based upon a conviction in the principles of the truth. There was a willingness to forsake natural heritage and to leave behind the natural family. That's the arena of faith, isn't it? Then there was hope, the promises were fully embraced in hope as verse 60 implies. And, as verse 61 says, that in the wake of those words, 'Rebekah arose and went with Eliezer'. There was humility and meekness and submission to the master as she gets down from the camel at the end of verse 64, and she takes the veil, you'll see it says in verse 65, 'For she had said unto the servant, what 'ish', (what man), is this that walketh in the field to meet us? And the servant had said, It is my master: therefore she took (not 'a veil', but 'the veil') and covered herself'. She had a physical beauty to show, we've seen that, but she covered it! She covered it out of respect for her master who stood before her now as her husband to be; there was no glory of her own to be displayed in his presence.

And then came the judgment seat, verse 66, 'And the servant told Isaac all things that he had done', just as the apostles and others will have to give an account of what they've done. As the apostle Paul says in Hebrews chapter 13 of those who are responsible for the flock, he gave an account of what he'd done. And his account was a good one, because the bride was there with her damsels. So, we're in the moral arena, aren't we, as we come down from verse 64? We're in the moral arena and then comes the physical! 'And Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent, and took Rebekah, and she became his wife; and he loved her! He loved her! Is it possible, b&s and young people, for us to conceive the love that Christ will have for His bride? Is it possible for us to really understand the sensitivities of that moment when He shall say, 'Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the

foundation of the world', as he takes her into his mother's tent, into Zion's tent, and there rejoices with her. 'Shut thy doors about thee, come my beloved'; how full the scripture is, b&s and young people, of those phrases that speak of that glorious moment when our Lord Jesus Christ will take to Himself his bride, and will be comforted after his mother's death!

All of us want to be there, don't we? We all want to be there. The answer lies in responding as Rebekah responded, mentally and morally, that we might have that physical association with our Master. It's all in our hands, b&s, many can preach to us, many can stand upon this platform and speak forth the Word, but no one, NO ONE can make you put your arms out and embrace the truth, or your husband-to-be! No one can do that but you, and you'll never do it unless your mind has been in that book, and you take the next vital step, and you enter the arena of morality and feeling and determination to be there in that day, when Isaac will be comforted after his mother's death!