

The secularist push to blur the distinctions between male and female, reverse the roles of husband and wife, and redefine the very meaning of this sacred institution, has exerted its diabolical influence both within and without the Church. The increase of premarital unchastity, trial-marriages, and sinful cohabitation, have gone far to obscure the Biblical significance of marriage in the minds of many. It is therefore refreshing to read the true story of a pure marriage, arranged by Divine circumstance, and sanctioned with pious parental blessing, as we find it preserved in the inspired record of Isaac and Rebekah's union. Happy is the couple who can walk in their exemplary footsteps, and happy is the home, that can recover this Biblical model of marriage as originally envisioned in the mind of God.

Prompted By Parental Involvement

The cavalier attitude exhibited by most professing Christian parents concerning their son's or daughter's choice of a life-time marriage partner is little-short of appalling. When the young lad or lassie reaches the ripe old age of eighteen, they are often sent off to some secular college where, after wading through the moral labyrinth of alcohol-dazed, drug-crazed, and immorally-minded college-life, they are expected, without the slightest guidance from their absentee parents, to find a suitable Christian mate with a Biblical worldview. The likelihood of such a scenario issuing in this fine result is nil. Could it be that many Christian parents are actually out of touch with the deplorable moral decadence of the

contemporary "Christian" youth scene, or do they simply not care?

The reality of the modern-day moral dilemma is staggering. According to recent statistics, about one out of five Americans has a sexually transmitted disease. About ten percent of babies are born to single teenagers. Pornography producers rake in billions of dollars annually. The typical male commits fornication or adultery with at least half a dozen women, and some surveys reveal that over 95 percent of people commit fornication prior to marriage!

Beloved Christian parent, this *is* the world to which your children of marriageable age are being introduced by state-sponsored educational institutions, and this is the *reality* they will eventually face in the work-force. Shall we abandon them to the mores of contemporary culture in the all-important matter of the choice of a mate, or will we like Abraham of old, become vitally involved, through prayerful guidance and leadership, in their selection of a future husband or wife? Abraham was, as we are, surrounded by a spiritually decadent and morally depraved culture, and as a consequence, he adamantly refused to take a bride for his son Isaac from the religiously incompatible and morally unsuitable Canaanites. Contemporary critics may fault him for what they perceive as a classic instance of religious bigotry, but our faithful patriarch was blissfully ignorant of their humanistic objections. Therefore he ordered his trusted steward to begin a counter-cultural search for his son's bride. We read, *"And Abraham said unto his eldest servant of his house, that ruled over all that he had, Put, I pray thee, thy hand*

under my thigh: And I will make thee swear by the LORD, the God of heaven, and the God of the earth, that thou shalt not take a wife unto my son of the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell: But thou shalt go unto my country, and to my kindred, and take a wife unto my son Isaac" (Gen. 24:2-4).

This solemn injunction is one indication of Abraham's exemplary piety, of which God had earlier given notice, *"For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment; that the LORD may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him"* (Genesis 18:19). Abraham, concerned parent that he was, did not hesitate to set boundaries in the process of choosing a marriage-partner, as did God Himself later in His requirements for both Israel and the church (Deut. 7:1-4; II Cor. 6:14-18; I Cor. 7:39). We would do well to follow his lead.

Prosecuted With Careful Prayer

Genesis 24:12: "And he said, O LORD God of my master Abraham, I pray thee, send me good speed [שָׂרָה וְרַב־כַּהֵן- "I pray, cause the right thing to occur"] this day, and shew kindness unto my master Abraham."

Abraham's servant, acquainted with the power of believing prayer, no doubt through a lengthy observation of Abraham's pious example (Gen. 12:8; 13:4; 18; 20:7,17), dare not begin the search for a bride without appealing in prayer for God's special guidance. The choice of a life partner, due to its profound importance,

is not a matter to be left to man's finite intellect and fickle inclinations. Such a decision requires the special insight which only God's Spirit can supply (Jer. 10:23). Unaided human sagacity cannot rightly determine that special someone whom God has appointed (Gen. 24:14,44), nor correctly assess the latent problems or hidden potential that lie dormant in a prospective partner. If God is to be duly glorified in the matter, His supernatural wisdom must be sought as the Author, Guide, and Finisher of the entire proceeding. When such is the case, we may rightly say, as did Laban and Bethuel, "The thing proceedeth from the Lord" (Gen. 24:50).

Practically Prudent

While Abraham's servant sought the blessing of God's supernatural guidance, he did not, in the process, disengage his mind, so as to simply leap into the dark. In his prayer he proposed a very practical test (Gen. 24:13,14) that was designed to give ample opportunity for Isaac's future bride to unconsciously exhibit the traits of her character. Qualities such as the fear of the Lord Jesus, sacrificial concern for others, a willingness to serve, submission to authority, genuine spirituality, courtesy, and self-oblivion are best observed within the various contexts that demand their exercise. It was Rebekah's hospitality, respect, cheerful generosity, and labor of love in providing drink for a stranger and then hastily descending and ascending the well's stairway to draw water for ten thirsty camels, that convinced the prayerful servant that this was indeed the woman for his master's son. Moreover, Abraham's servant on his part, gave ample evidence of Abraham's

and Isaac's wherewithal to support the young girl (Gen. 24:22,35,36,53). In short, the servant did not simply look for and follow after the first pretty face, but was Divinely led (vv.27,40,48) to act upon the principle later enunciated in the book of Proverbs: *"Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised"* (Prov. 31:30). He viewed the search for a bride as a call to consider spiritual issues of character.

Premaritally Pure

Rebekah's suitability was also referred to in terms of her chastity (Gen. 24:16). If this maiden of virtue had lived in our immoral age, she would have studiously avoided a live-in-arrangement, the inordinate emotional bonds of the dating game, and every imaginable form of premarital unchastity. Her love of purity betokened a chaste mind and a high regard for marriage, and was certainly in keeping with the apostolic sentiment: *"Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge"* (Heb. 13:4). Furthermore, this purity of heart and life was both maintained by and exhibited in a modest appearance that reflected the holy shame that shrinks from all ostentatious and sensual self-display. Thus, when she saw Isaac for the first time, *"she took a veil and covered herself"* (Gen. 24:65). If a facial veil was considered a proper gesture of feminine reserve, how much more the covering of all nakedness and the female form with full and concealing apparel—and how very different from the tight, form-fitting clothes, skimpy dresses, and state of near-nakedness that is common-fare today! Rebekah's veiled appearance reminds us of the New Tes-

tament injunction for Christian women to adorn themselves *"in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array"* (I Tim. 2:9). Yes, contrary to contemporary thought and expression, an inseparable relationship exists between modesty and morality, between purity of heart (Matt. 5:8) and propriety in deportment and dress. May Rebekah's example rekindle a kindred spirit in the Christian women of our day!

Domestically Profound

"And they blessed Rebekah, and said unto her, Thou art our sister, be thou the mother of thousands of millions, and let thy seed possess the gate of those which hate them...and he loved her: and Isaac was comforted after his mother's death" (Gen. 24:60,67b).

Marriage, as God ordained it, is a profound invitation to motherhood. The blessing of Rebekah's relatives reflected their view of marriage as a doorway to maternity. Here there is no thought of a career-conscious woman, seeking fulfillment and achievement outside the safe-haven of the home; no preventing and postponing of family-life until personal (selfish) dreams and financial goals are within reach. Rebekah was simply content to be a woman, and the matron of a household. What better field for the exercise of her God-given capabilities! Surely the woman who is about the business of the home is the most important business-woman in the world! The managerial skills, multi-tasking versatility, and economic coordination so essential to a well-ordered home will profoundly employ the talents of even the most capable female. As she sings to soothe the hurt

of a young child, hurries and scurries in the fulfilment of daily routines, counsels a needy teenager, maps the schedule for a busy week, and, in some cases, homeschools her own, is she not engaged in a high and holy calling? In an age that increasingly struggles under the psychological burden of feminism, it is high time that we tip our hats to the unsung hero of the home, who rocks the cradle and rules the world, by molding and shaping a future generation, leading the children under her care to Christ, teaching them to pray, and preparing them for life's duties through the well-ordered discipline of a godly home.

Isaac truly loved his young bride, the woman of God's very choosing; and in response to his benevolence, she comforted him as together they enjoyed the consoling companionship of a Divinely ordered marriage. They both found a profound happiness and felicitous home by following the Divine order for marriage.

Intentionally Permanent

"And Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent, and took Rebekah, and she became his wife" (Gen. 24:67a).

Isaac took (תקַח) Rebekah in a simple, solemn, ceremony before appropriate witnesses, as his life-time partner in wedlock. This action involved a covenant commitment (Mal. 2:14; Prov. 2:17) that bound both parties in perpetual obligation to one another. Jesus Christ's commentary on God's original intention in marriage, likewise serves to underscore the permanence of this union: *"Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder... and I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery"* (Matt. 19:6,9). This is marriage—as originally envisioned in the mind of God.

MARRIAGE IN THE MIND OF GOD

Sandhill Bible Church—4505 Sandhill Road—Auburn, AL
36830—(334)749-1062—sandhillchurch@bellsouth.net

Genesis 24:12-14: *"And he said, O LORD God of my master Abraham, I pray thee, send me good speed this day, and shew 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, that the damsel to whom I shall say, Let down thy pitcher, I pray thee, that I may drink; and she shall say, Drink, and I will give thy camels drink also: let the same be she that thou hast appointed for thy servant Isaac; and thereby shall I know that thou hast shewed kindness unto my master."*

The matter of marriage, so muddled in the minds of many moderns, is full of profound meaning, when viewed and pursued in the clear light of the Holy Bible. Perhaps as no other portion of Scripture, with the possible exception of the Biblical book of Ruth, the account of the search for Isaac's bride contained in Genesis chapter 24, sets forth in vivid detail the sublime simplicity of marriage as God intended it to be. Perceptive souls are well-aware that the meaning of marriage, as it has Biblically and traditionally been understood (the holy union of one man and one woman for life) is currently under siege.