

THE BOOK OF BEGINNINGS

"God is Almighty Father: able and desirous of turning everything to our good." —Hermann Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*

"God & Rebekah"

The Background of Rebekah's Story: Genesis 24:1-14

- Rebekah's story begins in Gen. 24 with a conversation between her future father-in-law and one of his servants. Following the death of Sarah, Abraham determined to find a wife for his son, Isaac.
- ⇒ The woman was not to come from among the Canaanites but was instead to be from among his extended family. As we have seen, he had good reason not to want his son to marry from among the local population (Gen. 19). Abraham sent his servant, therefore, to Mesopotamia and the city of Nahor.
- ⇒ In contrast to what we have seen in Genesis regarding the people of Canaan, Rebekah was _____ (24:16) and _____ (24:18-21, 25).

➔ Confidence in the _____ power of Yahweh forms the backdrop for the events of Genesis 24.

- Abraham was confident that the Angel of Yahweh would go before his servant.

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. —Gen. 24:7

- The servant was confident that Yahweh would hear his prayer.

"O Lord, God of my master Abraham, please grant me success today and show steadfast love to my master Abraham." —Gen. 24:12

- Rebekah's family recognized that all of these events had come about because of the Word of Yahweh.

Then Laban and Bethuel answered and said, "The thing has come from the Lord; we cannot speak to you bad or good. Behold, Rebekah is before you; take her and go, and let her be the wife of your master's son, as the Lord has spoken." —Gen. 24:50-51

Lessons on God's Sovereignty from the Life of Rebekah

1. The sovereignty of God is much easier to accept when the circumstances of life are _____.

- Having heard all that was said by the servant regarding Yahweh and his blessing of Abraham and his son, Rebekah decided to trust His sovereign provision for her and to leave her family to go with the servant.

Her brother and her mother said, "Let the young woman remain with us 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 Rebekah and said to her, "Will you go with this man?" She said, "I will go." —Gen. 24:55-58

- Before she left, she was blessed by her family: *"Our sister, may you become thousands of ten thousands, and may your offspring possess the gate of those who hate him!" (26:60b)*
- This blessing is nearly identical to Yahweh's promise to Abraham and Isaac following the events on Mt. Moriah:

I will surely bless you, and I will surely multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. And your offspring shall possess the gate of his enemies, and in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice." —Gen. 22:17-18

➔ Moses is showing his audience that God's promises to Abraham will _____ to Rebekah and to her offspring also.

2. God's sovereignty is often much harder to accept in the _____ circumstances of life.

- While her marriage brought comfort to both her and her husband initially, they struggled for nearly 20 years with infertility. After all that time, God opened her womb and she became pregnant.

"And Isaac prayed to the Lord for his wife, because she was barren. And the Lord granted his prayer, and Rebekah his wife conceived. The children struggled together within her, and she said, 'If it is thus, why is this happening to me?'" –Gen. 25:21-22a

- Her pregnancy, which she had long awaited, was incredibly difficult. So much so that she struggled to understand why God was doing this to her if this was indeed His will for her and her family.

"If it is thus, why is this happening to me?" → This phrase can be literally rendered, *"If so, why am I?"* It is possible that she is going as far as questioning her own existence, something that at times in Scripture others do in light of the circumstances of their own lives.

Job 3:1,3—After this Job opened his mouth and cursed the day of his birth. "Let the day perish on which I was born, and the night that said, 'A man is conceived.'"

Jer. 20:14—Cursed be the day on which I was born! The day when my mother bore me, let it not be blessed!

→ **Rebekah did not let her despair turn her away from the Lord, but rather towards Him in _____.**

So she went to inquire of the Lord. And the Lord said to her, "Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples from within you shall be divided; the one shall be stronger than the other, the older shall serve the younger." –Gen. 25:22b-23

- The Word of the Lord came to her, explaining that this was the will of Yahweh which had much larger and wider implications within His plans and purposes.

⇒ Her struggles with her pregnancy were purposeful in ways that she could not fully understand.

3. Because humanity is sinful, we are often impatient, not willing to wait for God to accomplish His sovereign will but instead attempting to bring it about in our own _____ and _____.

Now Rebekah was listening when Isaac spoke to his son Esau. So when Esau went to the field to hunt for game and bring it, Rebekah said to her son Jacob, "I heard your father speak to your brother Esau, 'Bring me game and prepare for me delicious food, that I may eat it and bless you before the Lord before I die.' Now therefore, my son, obey my voice as I command you. Go to the flock and bring me two good young goats, so that I may prepare from them delicious food for your father, such as he loves. And you shall bring it to your father to eat, so that he may bless you before he dies." –Gen. 27:5-10

- Rebekah, knowing that it was God's will for Esau to serve Jacob, encouraged him to deceive his father and to steal his brother's blessing.
- Her unwillingness to trust in God's sovereign plan had devastating consequences for her and her family.

"Let your curse be on me, my son..." –Gen. 27:13

⇒ It surely caused further damage to her relationship with Isaac.

⇒ It further damaged the relationship between Esau and Jacob (Gen. 27:41).

⇒ It led to her being separated for most of the rest of her life from the son whom she loved so dearly (27:42-45).

4. Human _____ and _____ can never prevent the sovereign will of God from being accomplished.

- Humanity is invited to work with God in accomplishing His will.

Deut. 10:1-2—"You shall therefore love the Lord your God and keep his charge, his statutes, his rules, and his commandments always. And consider today (since I am not speaking to your children who have not known or seen it), consider the discipline of the Lord your God, his greatness, his mighty hand and his outstretched arm..."

Phil. 2:12-13—Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

How can we work with God and not against God?

Gal. 5:16— But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.

Col. 2:6-7— Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.