

GENESIS 24

Introduction

God is romantic.

It would be more precise theologically to say that love is an attribute of God, and that God's love is sometimes expressed in the form of romance. While more precise, it would be less passionate. Most books on theology, while precise, are not passionate. They mention love as an attribute of God, but entirely fail to discuss the romantic aspect of His love. Yet God Himself goes to great lengths to portray the romantic aspect of His love in the Bible.

The Bible is full with manuscripts and metaphors that reveal God's love as romantic:

The manuscripts are two whole books of the inspired Word of God, the Book of Ruth and the Song of Solomon.

The Book of Ruth is the romance of redemption. The book presents an important teaching in the biblical doctrine of redemption. You see there that redemption is possible only through a kinsman-redeemer. God could not redeem apart from a mediator, and since only God could redeem it was necessary for Him to become that person. God tells you that important doctrinal truth, though, in the context of a romantic love story! The Book of Ruth tells the commonplace story of a couple who love each other, but their love is a mirror in which we can see the divine love of Jesus for you and me. Boaz is a type of Jesus Christ, and Ruth is a type of the redeemed believer that He passionately loves.

The Song of Solomon is the romance of relationship. It is primarily a book celebrating romantic love in the relationship between husbands and wives. It also speaks, though, of the love of God for His beloved - of His love for *you*. Again please note the romantic context in which God reveals His love.

As for romantic metaphors, there are many:

In the Old Testament God the Father speaks of the nation of Israel as His wife, and of Himself as her Husband...

Isaiah 62:5 "...as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, So shall your God rejoice over you."
Jeremiah 3:14 "Return, O backsliding children," says the LORD; "for I am married to you. I will take you, one from a city and two from a family, and I will bring you to Zion."
Hosea 2:19 "I will betroth you to Me forever; Yes, I will betroth you to Me In righteousness and justice, In lovingkindness and mercy..."

In the New Testament the Church is called the bride of God the Son, Jesus Christ...

2 Corinthians 11:2 "...For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present *you* as a chaste virgin to Christ."
Ephesians 5:25 & 32 "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her...This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church."

God is romantic. In manuscripts and in metaphors He reveals the romantic aspects of His love for you.

Genesis Twenty-four is romantic. It is *Sleepless in Seattle* set in Palestine - *NoDoz in Nahor!* Having never seen each other, Isaac and Rebekah fall deeply and romantically in love.

There are two important secondary applications of Genesis Twenty-four that reveal the romance of God's love:

#1 God Reveals The Romance Of His Love In His Plan For Your Salvation, and #2 You Reveal The Romance Of God's Love In The Passion Of Your Service.

#1 God Reveals The Romance Of His Love
For You In His Plan For Your Salvation

Abraham sends his servant to secure a bride for his son. Just so, God the Father sends forth the Holy Spirit to secure a bride for *His* Son, Jesus Christ! While the romance of Isaac and Rebekah is important for many reasons, none is so precious as the way it reveals the plan of salvation as God's romantic wooing of lost sinners to Jesus.

In Genesis Twenty-two you saw Isaac going to Mount Moriah as the father's beloved son obedient to death, even to the death of sacrifice. Jesus was the only begotten and beloved Son of the Father:

1 John 4:9 In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him.

Mark 1:11 Then a voice came from heaven, "You are My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

Philippians 2:8 And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to *the point of* death, even the death of the cross.

John 3:16 "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."

In Genesis Twenty-three you saw the death of Sarah. Her death is a type of the sweeping changes that took place after the nation of Israel rejected the love of God through Jesus Christ:

Matthew 23:37-39 "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under *her* wings, but you were not willing! See! Your house is left to you desolate; for I say to you, you shall see Me no more till you say, 'Blessed *is* He who comes in the name of the LORD!'"

In Genesis Twenty-four you see Rebekah brought into Sarah's tent. This speaks of the Church as the bride of Jesus Christ, now occupying the place of blessing:

Acts 28:28 "Therefore let it be known to you that the salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles, and they will hear it!"

Looking ahead to Genesis Twenty-five, Abraham remarries, to a woman named Keturah. Keturah represents Israel in a future day when the nation will be restored to her place of prominence and blessing. God is not yet through with Israel as a nation, nor are you to confuse the distinctions between Israel and the Church:

Romans 11:25-27 For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: "The Deliverer will come out of Zion, And He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob; For this *is* My covenant with them, When I take away their sins."

The Chapter we're studying reveals the romance of God as He seeks to woo lost sinners to His Son in the Church age in which we live. The Son has already passed through the experience of obedience,

death, and resurrection; He waits in the presence of His Father to receive His bride. God the Holy Spirit is sent forth from heaven to speak of Him, drawing men and women and children to His love.

God the Holy Spirit speaks only of His mission, of the Son, and of the Father's house. He initiates contact and then induces you to come with Him. He takes advantage of life's ordinary circumstances. It was the servant's way with Rebekah; it is the Spirit's way with your soul. He brings you to the point of decision, asking "Will you go with this Man?"

When you respond to God's love the way Rebekah did, saying "I will go," you begin a long, arduous journey through the desert to meet your Bridegroom. God the Holy Spirit, though, remains with you to guide and guard, and to tell you about your Beloved as you are traveling along the way.

As you travel you are learning of Jesus Christ. The more you learn of Him, the more you find yourself longing for Him. The more your learning leads to longing, you find yourself looking for Him, as Rebekah in v64, "lifted her eyes..."

All the time, like Isaac back with Abraham, Jesus waits until the time appointed by His Father when He can go forth to meet His bride. The time seems long, but just as with Isaac and Rebekah, the great day comes when the marriage takes place.

God's plan of salvation is a cosmic romance story! The Bible is a collection of love letters, written to the human race. History is moving towards a wedding and a wedding feast. God has revealed His love; it is up to you to receive it or reject it.

#2 You Reveal The Romance Of God's Love In The Passion Of Your Service

There is another wonderful application of Genesis Twenty-four. While Abraham's servant is typical of God the Holy Spirit, he is also typical of the kind of service you and I ought to render to our Father as we seek to be His instruments in sharing His love with others He is

seeking to woo to His Son. Your passionate service, patterned after Abraham's servant, can reveal the romance of God's love to others!

Genesis 24:1 Now Abraham was old, well advanced in age; and the LORD had blessed Abraham in all things.

Genesis 24:2 So Abraham said to the oldest servant of his house, who ruled over all that he had, "Please, put your hand under my thigh,

You are never told the name of Abraham's servant. He performs his service without notoriety...

Genesis 24:3 "and I will make you swear by the LORD, the God of heaven and the God of the earth, that you will not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell;

Genesis 24:4 "but you shall go to my country and to my family, and take a wife for my son Isaac."

Again and again you are reminded *not* to marry the unbeliever - only those from your own spiritual family. Your service will be greatly hindered if you willingly yoke yourself to the unbeliever...

Genesis 24:5 And the servant said to him, "Perhaps the woman will not be willing to follow me to this land. Must I take your son back to the land from which you came?"

Genesis 24:6 But Abraham said to him, "Beware that you do not take my son back there.

Genesis 24:7 "The LORD God of heaven, who took me from my father's house and from the land of my family, and who spoke to me and swore to me, saying, 'To your descendants I give this land,' He will send His angel before you, and you shall take a wife for my son from there.

The servant begins to consider the obstacles. He suggests his own plan for fulfilling his service. But he is quickly corrected, reminded of God's precepts and of God's power...Let your service be based upon the Word, and wait upon the Lord for His empowering to perform it.

Genesis 24:8 "And if the woman is not willing to follow you, then you will be released from this oath; only do not take my son back there."

You are only responsible for faithfulness in serving the Lord - *not* for the results...

Genesis 24:9 So the servant put his hand under the thigh of Abraham his master, and swore to him concerning this matter.

The "thigh" is near the male reproductive organs. This custom was a solemn sign that if the oath were not carried out, the children who would be born to Abraham would avenge the servant's unfaithfulness.

For our purposes, we learn that if we fail in our service, God will raise up others to carry out and to carry on His work...

Genesis 24:10 Then the servant took ten of his master's camels and departed, for all his master's goods *were in* his hand. And he arose and went to Mesopotamia, to the city of Nahor.
Genesis 24:11 And he made his camels kneel down outside the city by a well of water at evening time, the time when women go out to draw *water*.
Genesis 24:12 Then he said, "O LORD God of my master Abraham, please give me success this day, and show kindness to my master Abraham.
Genesis 24:13 "Behold, *here* I stand by the well of water, and the daughters of the men of the city are coming out to draw water.
Genesis 24:14 "Now let it be that the young woman to whom I say, 'Please let down your pitcher that I may drink,' and she says, 'Drink, and I will also give your camels a drink'; *let her be the one* You have appointed for Your servant Isaac. And by this I will know that You have shown kindness to my master."

Three things characterize the servant: Prayer, Providence, and Prophecy.

Prayer

He prayed constantly...Later his prayers gave rise to praise and worship.

Providence

He understood that there were no ordinary circumstances...Even watering his camels might be, in God's providence, an opportunity...

Prophecy

This isn't really a "fleece," or any kind of foolish test. I believe that God was granting him a word of knowledge as he prayed, giving him prophetic insight as he ministered before the Lord...

Genesis 24:15 And it happened, before he had finished speaking, that behold, Rebekah, who was born to Bethuel, son of Milcah, the wife of Nahor, Abraham's brother, came out with her pitcher on her shoulder.
Genesis 24:16 Now the young woman *was very beautiful to behold*, a virgin; no man had known her. And she went down to the well, filled her pitcher, and came up.
Genesis 24:17 And the servant ran to meet her and said, "Please let me drink a little water from your pitcher."
Genesis 24:18 So she said, "Drink, my lord." Then she quickly let her pitcher down to her hand, and gave him a drink.

Having spent time with the Lord, the servant is looking for an opportunity to share about his master's son in the common circumstances of life...

Genesis 24:19 And when she had finished giving him a drink, she said, "I will draw *water* for your camels also, until they have finished drinking."

Genesis 24:20 Then she quickly emptied her pitcher into the trough, ran back to the well to draw *water*, and drew for all his camels.

Genesis 24:21 And the man, wondering at her, remained silent so as to know whether the LORD had made his journey prosperous or not.

It is curious that he "remained silent" until Rebekah was finished. She would have gone to the well about two hundred times to fill her one gallon bucket over a period of several hours.

There *are* situations that call for you as God's servant to remain silent and to observe, looking for God's approval. In my service as a Pastor this silent observation is demanded in Scripture before I and the Elders select others who serve...

Genesis 24:22 So it was, when the camels had finished drinking, that the man took a golden nose ring weighing half a shekel, and two bracelets for her wrists weighing ten *shekels* of gold, Genesis 24:23 and said, "Whose daughter *are* you? Tell me, please, is there room *in* your father's house for us to lodge?"

Genesis 24:24 So she said to him, "I *am* the daughter of Bethuel, Milcah's son, whom she bore to Nahor."

Genesis 24:25 Moreover she said to him, "We have both straw and feed enough, and room to lodge."

Genesis 24:26 Then the man bowed down his head and worshipped the LORD.

Genesis 24:27 And he said, "Blessed *be* the LORD God of my master Abraham, who has not forsaken His mercy and His truth toward my master. As for me, being on the way, the LORD led me to the house of my master's brethren."

Genesis 24:28 So the young woman ran and told her mother's household these things.

The servant brought forth his master's gifts, and properly used them to minister to Rebekah...

Genesis 24:29 Now Rebekah had a brother whose name *was* Laban, and Laban ran out to the man by the well.

Genesis 24:30 So it came to pass, when he saw the nose ring, and the bracelets on his sister's wrists, and when he heard the words of his sister Rebekah, saying, "Thus the man spoke to me," that he went to the man. And there he stood by the camels at the well.

Genesis 24:31 And 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."

Laban is worldly and carnal, an unbeliever who feigns spirituality. His interest is in the gifts and in personal gain...You are warned *not* to be that kind of servant...

Genesis 24:32 Then the man came to the house. And he unloaded the camels, and provided straw and feed for the camels, and water to wash his feet and the feet of the men who *were* with him.

Genesis 24:33 *Food* was set before him to eat, but he said, "I will not eat until I have told about my errand." And he said, "Speak on."

Food was not as important to Abraham's servant as doing his master's will...

In verses 34-48 Abraham's servant recounts the entire episode. It speaks to you, as God's servant, of giving testimony...

Genesis 24:49 "Now if you will deal kindly and truly with my master, tell me. And if not, tell me, that I may turn to the right hand or to the left."

There comes a point of decision...

Genesis 24:50 Then Laban and Bethuel answered and said, "The thing comes from the LORD; we cannot speak to you either bad or good.

Genesis 24:51 "Here *is* Rebekah before you; take *her* and go, and let her be your master's son's wife, as the LORD has spoken."

Genesis 24:52 And it came to pass, when Abraham's servant heard their words, that he worshipped the LORD, *bowing himself* to the earth.

Genesis 24:53 Then the servant brought out jewelry of silver, jewelry of gold, and clothing, and gave *them* to Rebekah. He also gave precious things to her brother and to her mother.

Genesis 24:54 And he and the men who *were* with him ate and drank and stayed all night. Then they arose in the morning, and he said, "Send me away to my master."

Genesis 24:55 But her brother and her mother said, "Let the young woman stay with us *a few* days, at least ten; after that she may go."

Genesis 24:56 And he said to them, "Do not hinder me, since the LORD has prospered my way; send me away so that I may go to my master."

Delays and distractions are offered to Abraham's servant. He knows they are deadly to the success of his service...

Genesis 24:57 So they said, "We will call the young woman and ask her personally."

Genesis 24:58 Then they called Rebekah and said to her, "Will you go with this man?" And she said, "I will go."

Genesis 24:59 So they sent away Rebekah their sister and her nurse, and Abraham's servant and his men.

Genesis 24:60 And they blessed Rebekah and said to her: "Our sister, *may you become The mother of* thousands of ten thousands; And may your descendants possess The gates of those who hate them."

Genesis 24:61 Then Rebekah and her maids arose, and they rode on the camels and followed the man. So the servant took Rebekah and departed.

For her part, Rebekah obeys immediately. She leaves the comforts of her home and family to set out as a pilgrim on a journey to meet her bridegroom...

Genesis 24:62 Now Isaac came from the way of Beer Lahai Roi, for he dwelt in the South.

Genesis 24:63 And Isaac went out to meditate in the field in the evening; and he lifted his eyes and looked, and there, the camels *were* coming.

Genesis 24:64 Then Rebekah lifted her eyes, and when she saw Isaac she dismounted from her camel;

Genesis 24:65 for she had said to the servant, "Who *is* this man walking in the field to meet us?" The servant said, "It *is* my master." So she took a veil and covered herself.

Genesis 24:66 And the servant told Isaac all the things that he had done.

There will come a time when *you* will tell "all the things you have done." For now, you "cover yourself" by heaping up for yourself heavenly rewards that will forever adorn you in eternity!

Genesis 24:67 Then Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent; and he took Rebekah and she became his wife, and he loved her. So Isaac was comforted after his mother's *death*.

The great declaration of the Book of the Revelation of Jesus Christ is, "Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready." And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints" (Revelation 19:7-8).

When your service is like the service of Abraham's servant, it reveals to all looking on the romance of God's love both for you and for them.

Conclusion

God has revealed the romance of His love in the manuscripts and metaphors of Scripture.

The unbeliever loathes His love as revealed in the Word...
The believer is capable of leaving the passion of this romantic love.
Writing to the Church at Ephesus, Jesus said,

Revelation 2:4 "Nevertheless I have *this* against you, that you have left your first love."

Better to receive and remain in the romantic love of your engagement!