

THE
PLEDGE, POWER, PROTECTION,
AND
GUIDANCE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT
THROUGH THE WILDERNESS.

“Wilt *thou* go with this man?”—
Genesis xxiv. 58.

L O N D O N :
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GENESIS XXIV.

WE have a beautiful picture in this chapter of the calling of the bride—the church. Its position, too, amongst the types here is exceedingly wonderful.

It comes after chapter xxii., where you get the type of the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, and all the details that are given of that wonderful act. And after chapter xxiii., in which you get the death of Sarah, which answers to the setting aside of Israel. Sarah was the mother of Isaac ; and it was of Israel, as concerning the flesh Christ came. Chapter xxiii. brings you to the point in the history which

you reach in Acts vii., where Israel definitely rejects, not only the testimony of the Messiah who had come into this world, but also the testimony of the Holy Ghost, who came down after Christ had died and was risen, and again offered them repentance upon the ground of that work, but it is again rejected. Sarah, Isaac's mother, dies. So Israel is set aside. Her responsibility is all over until God takes her up again, and puts her into the land in the little remnant that will be left. The Lord says to the fig-tree, "Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever." (Matt. xxi. 19.) God looks for nothing from man after the flesh. He can produce no fruit for God. All God's promises of blessing will be fulfilled in Israel, but upon the basis of the *promises* of God, not upon the basis of Israel's responsibility.

From that on, you get the calling of the bride. Like all God's dealings dispensationally they overlap. Before one dispensation has run out God begins to act according to another; so that

before Israel is swept from the scene, God is calling out those who shall form the bride. In Acts vii. you get Israel refuses the testimony and is set aside. In chapter ix. Paul is called out, the one to whom was committed specially the ministry of the church; but from chapter ii. the church is in process of formation.

In Genesis xxiv., then, you get the calling of the bride. Eliezer, "the servant," goes to seek her. The meaning of Eliezer is, "My God, my help." A very blessed name, but which does not occur in the chapter, where he appears only as "*the servant*;" and it is a blessed fact for us that God the Holy Spirit is here as a Servant, not an influence merely, but a Person. The fact of the presence of the Holy Ghost is so often in Christendom resolved into the idea of an influence. He is a real Person—God the Spirit. He is no less personally here than Christ was. God the Son was here in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ, God the Spirit is here to-day. It is the sin of Christen-

dom that they ignore the presence of God the Spirit.

What a solemn thing it was when they denied the presence of God the Son! They say, "Is not this Jesus the son of Joseph?" The blessed Lord had said to them in John vi., "Every one that seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have eternal life." (Ver. 40.) They did not see in Him the Son of God; they did not believe on Him: they say, "Is not this Jesus *the son of Joseph?*" (Ver. 42.) It was absolute condemnation to them. People often say, I wish I had been here when the Lord Jesus Christ was on earth! But you might have looked upon Him as a Man upon earth, without its producing any other effect upon you than upon most of those who saw Him then; like the clay put upon the eyes of the blind man, which would only make him more blind. They could not see through the veil of His flesh that He was Son of God. It is a much more blessed thing to be born to-day when the work of redemption is accomplished, and the

Holy Ghost is here to testify to Christ in glory.

All these types have a double character. We can look at them historically or as a type. To look first at this chapter historically we may learn a lesson from Eliezer as a servant. Two things characterize him as such: first, dependence; secondly, devotedness. He did everything by prayer; he went into the way his master had sent him; and the first thing you find him doing is praying. He brings his camels to a certain place, and then he kneels down and prays. (Vers. 11, 12.) Then in prayer He proves God, he does not tempt Him. There is a difference between proving God and tempting Him. Gideon proves God with his fleece. First, dew upon the fleece only; then dry upon the fleece only, and dew upon all the ground. Eliezer also proves God. It is a right thing. God condescends even to our weak faith (although it was not weak faith here). He proves God by suggesting a certain course to Him. He was conscious he

was in the way in which he ought to go. Here am I, he says, let it be so and so. God does guide His people in that way to-day just as much as He did then.

As Eliezer said, so it came to pass. The very first thing he does, when he finds that what he says has come to pass, is to kneel down and thank God before he eats. He finds he has got the woman he came for. God has answered all his suggestions; he has found the object of his search, and he says, "I will not satisfy my hunger until I have finished my message. I will perform my service, then I will eat." So you get dependence and devotedness. He prayed in dependence, and he did not forget afterwards to thank God. Is there not a great fault amongst saints of God in this respect? In our need we cry to Him; we get the answer, and we are not careful to thank Him. The very joy of obtaining the answer is often enough to drive out of our minds what ought to be the first effect of it. God demands His praise, His thanksgiving.

Eliezer prayed and he gave thanks. He had the discernment (spiritual discernment) to see that all that he had asked for was granted; then he gives his message, and afterwards he satisfies himself.

So much for the history, now for the type. Abraham sends Eliezer to get a wife for Isaac. Let us remember that Isaac is in type the dead and risen Christ. Eliezer is to get a woman from the country whence Abraham came, and bring her to the place where Isaac is—the land, which for us is heaven. Christ claims kindred with the people here, for He was a real Man here on earth. He is a real Man now on the throne of God, though not under the same conditions as He was when on earth. He claims kindred with the people whom He wants to share His throne and all He has with Him. All that Eliezer says about Abraham is very blessed: "God has made my master rich; he is become great; he has flocks and herds, silver and gold . . . and all that he has he has given unto Isaac." It

answers to Hebrews i. : "God has appointed His Son heir of all things, and He is the one who has purged our sins."

The Holy Ghost comes down to woo and to win a bride for Him, who is the object of the Father's love. He says, "The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand" (John iii. 35); and I want you to share it. Eliezer comes then.

I believe we have now in the type a fourfold picture of the Holy Spirit.

First, in the things which he brought and gave to Rebekah.

Secondly, in the camels—he took ten of his master's camels.

Thirdly, in the men that were with him.

Fourthly, in Eliezer himself.

So you get:—

First, in the things he brought—the Holy Spirit, the earnest of the inheritance.

Secondly, in the camels—the Holy Spirit, the power.

Thirdly, in the band of men—the

Holy Ghost, as protection as we pass through this scene.

Fourthly, in Eliezer the Holy Ghost the Comforter. Then we may look at the meeting with Isaac. I do not go into *all* the details of this long chapter, though most interesting. But first we look for a moment at the way in which he seeks to win her.

He asks her three questions to begin with. First, "Let me, I pray thee, drink a little water of thy pitcher." What does that first question put you in mind of? Does it not put you in mind of John iv., where the blessed Lord says to the woman, "Give me to drink"? That is often the way God begins. The Lord would put the woman at ease in His presence, and so takes the place of dependence upon her for a little refreshment. It was not only that, but the Lord really got what He asked for. We do not read that the woman gave Him water from the well; but when they came to Him and offered Him food, He says, "I have meat to eat that ye know not of." He had got the

draught He asked for. He had got the joy of His heart in the entrance of His word into the heart of that poor woman.

The Lord is saying now, "Give me to drink." "Give me, I pray thee, a little water of thy pitcher." It is a wonderful thing to think we can give a little refreshment to the heart of the Lord Jesus Christ, or to the Holy Ghost; and when we come to Luke xv. we see it is the joy *they* get. "There is joy in the *presence* of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth."

When the Lord begins with the sinner He often begins in that way. So the Spirit of God is seeking refreshment for Himself—for Christ; may we not also say refreshment for God? Here the woman lets down her pitcher upon her hand and gives him to drink. She answers in every way to his own plan, and he gives her earrings and bracelets of gold.

He has put the bracelets upon her hands, and then he asks her a second

question, "Whose daughter art thou? Tell me, I pray thee, Is there room in thy father's house for us to lodge in?" She declares her kindred, but in doing that she only proves she belongs to a country and a people doomed to destruction. But still *He* asks lodgment there. The Holy Ghost wants to take up His abode in the heart that has given Him refreshment, and to whom He has also communicated some of the earnest of the inheritance. He wants it and He gets it. We get in Ephesians i. 13, "In whom also after that ye believed ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of the inheritance," &c. He takes up His abode in the heart of the believer; He abides there. The Lord says, in John xiv., "He abideth with you, and shall be in you." "He shall abide with you for ever." If that is the case, it is not only the joy of salvation that we get, but I am to take in as a lodger (shall I say?) the Holy Spirit! I shall have to be very careful then what other lodgers I keep there.

He gets refreshment from me ; then He comes to take up His abode in me: What for? Is it to make me a happy man in this place? No! As with Eliezer, He wants to detach Rebekah from the place around her.

And so eventually the third question is put to her, "Wilt thou go with this man?" Now he has found the object of his search, is she willing to go across the desert to a person whom she only knows by report? As we sing:—

"Though the shore we hope to land on,
 Only by report is known,
 Yet we freely all abandon,
 Led by that report alone,
 And with Jesus
 Through the trackless deep move on."

Only it is here rather than "with Jesus" in the company of the Holy Spirit. He has taken up His abode in us to detach us from the world, to place us in the wilderness with our faces heavenward. May we not seek for reality in this, and put to ourselves this question, "Wilt

thou go? Oh that Rebekah's admirable answer may be ours also, "*I will go.*"

Abraham said to Eliezer, "The Lord God of heaven which took me from my father's house . . . he shall send his angel before thee, and thou shalt take a wife unto my son from thence." (Ver. 7.) How he insists upon it. "Beware then that thou bring not my son thither again." (Ver. 6.) "Only bring not my son thither again." (Ver. 8.) Bring Christ back into this scene as it is! I know He will reign here by-and-by. But the Christ who was murdered here—bring Him back into it! Do you want an earthly Christ? God will not have an earthly Christ to-day. It must be a heavenly Christ. In Philippians iii. the apostle speaks of the calling above—*Christ* the object; *Christ in heaven* the goal. When you see such a motto as "The World for Jesus," which so many Christians have now, you have them doing exactly what Abraham warned his servant not to do for Isaac. Christ is not coming to this scene as it is. He has gone through it and been rejected.

When He comes again it will be to judge it.

What a solemn thing it is. We profess not only to have answered the first question and to have given refreshment to the heart of Christ, of the Spirit, we may say to the Trinity; but we say also we were sealed by the Holy Ghost, and He is dwelling in us. What is it for? Is it not that, like Eliezer, He may win our hearts from the scene around us, and attach our hearts to the One from whom He came. *Wilt thou go? Are we on our way heavenward?* When you settle down in the scene here you are actuated, not by the Holy Ghost, but by the nature you have in you which enjoys the scene.

Here in Laban you have a picture of the mere professor, who was interested in the man who had come into their midst, because of the presents which he had scattered around him. He saw there was a distinct advantage in Rebekah's having to say to that man; and, further, he himself receives precious things. The next thing Laban does is

to try to hinder the object of Eliezer. People are ready to receive everything ; but if you have only come in to take them out of the scene they do not like that. Stay a little while, they say, Do you want to go to heaven at once? If I am in company with the Holy Ghost I am "In spirit there already," as we sing. "Let the damsel abide with us a few days, at least ten," they say to him. Let her have a period of enjoyment here, and then go. That will not do! "Hinder me not," he says, "send me away that I may go to my master." So they say, "We will call the damsel, and inquire at her mouth." As soon as they ask her, she comes straight out with the answer from her heart, "I will go."

Have *you* said it, beloved friends? Are your hearts detached from all here — parents, friends, home, relations, everything around you? Are you ready to leave country, kindred, and father's house? To make the place which would be the sphere of your enjoyment a wilderness to go with that man,

that you may reach that blessed Man yonder in the glory? Has each reader answered, "I will go"? No turning back, no lingering after what is behind. Not like Lot's wife, who lingered after what was left behind. And well she might. She had daughters in Sodom, had helped on their marriage with the men of Sodom, and her interests were there. She turned back, and became a pillar of salt. That is not what God wants. God says, "Wilt thou go?" Is He not asking each heart now, "Wilt *thou* go?"

I believe our hearts are getting slothful, beloved brethren, with regard to that wonderful position that God has put us in, in answer to the Lord Jesus Christ's work, the One who is now occupying heaven for us; and He is saying to us by the Holy Ghost, Are you content to be here a little wholly for Me in this scene until I come? This makes it a wilderness to us, and we go with the Holy Ghost to meet Him.

Now, for a moment, we turn to what

we get in these pictures of the Holy Ghost.

First, He is the Earnest, as we saw in the things that He gave to Rebekah. When we are converted we get immediately a sense of the blessedness of the scene to which we are going. Who can rightly estimate the joy of the young Christian—the new power we were conscious of, the bubbling up of the new affection that was in us that went out after Christ, the new object. For a moment the ground was clear. It puts me in mind of the fire by which the colonists clear their ground. They cut down the trees, and when these are thoroughly dry they get a running fire over the ground. The fire blazes, burning up everything, and chars the earth to a depth of eight or ten inches, clearing the ground of every wild seed. The colonists get two good crops from that ground, without a single weed all that time. It is like passing the judgment of God over all that was natural to us before. For a moment we have nothing but the joy of the new thing,

the old seems to be kept in abeyance. The joy of the heart is such, and the habits are so utterly changed ; one finds such distaste for what one used to delight in, and such delight in what was before so distasteful, a man may think I am entirely changed. I can understand a *young* Christian being taken with the theory, that there is nothing of the old nature left at all. But he soon finds that he has, as the planter soon finds he has all his work to keep the weeds under. But at first he does get such a sense of the blessedness of being linked with that Christ in heaven, the heart goes out after Him and nothing else.

The servant gave Rebekah jewels of silver, jewels of gold, and raiment. Silver in scripture sets forth redemption. Silver was given for the atonement money, and it must be paid in half shekels of silver. Then it was made into blocks of a talent weight, which formed the sockets of the tabernacle boards. The boards did not stand in the sand of the wilderness at all, each

board stood on two sockets of silver, and God does not half redeem us. It is like a man having two feet firmly planted on redemption; it is not one foot in the wilderness and one upon redemption; we are perfectly redeemed.

Gold sets forth divine righteousness; He invests us with divine righteousness before God; and raiment sets forth practical righteousness. The two things must always go together. We are made the righteousness of God in Christ, but that is not enough. You come forth and say, God has made me righteous before Him. The man of the world says, I want to see you righteous here. God looks that his saints should be thus, as Christ said to His disciples when enunciating the principles of the kingdom: "Except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no wise enter the kingdom of heaven." Righteousness is a very comprehensive word. The world thinks if a man pays his debts and does his duty to his neighbour he is righteous, and he may think and do

as he likes as to his duty to God. But the law even says, love God *first* and then love your neighbour. Still, we must have practical righteousness, and this is what the raiment signifies. "The fine linen is the righteousnesses of the saints" (Rev. xix. 8)—*i.e.*, the fruit of their own righteous acts. In these things you get the Spirit as the earnest; they set forth what the Spirit brings. You must remember all the treasures of His Master were in His hand.

Secondly, we get the camels. He took ten of his master's camels. This is a type of power. A beast in scripture sets forth power. "Rebekah arose and her damsels, and they rode upon the camels and followed the man." (Ver. 61.) She was going through the desert, and was not a bit suited to the sands of the desert. But Abraham had sent the "ship of the desert," a creature exactly suited to the desert; its padded feet would take a firm hold of the sand, and go swiftly over it. If Rebekah had attempted the journey on her own feet she would soon have been weary of it.

So, if it is a wilderness to us, if the "treasure we have found in His love" has made it a wilderness, let us see that we do not try to go through it on our own feet. God has sent a power to sustain us; there is no need that I touch the sands of the desert with the soles of my feet. That is God's provision. He has sent down the Holy Ghost, that He may take us up as Eliezer took Rebekah and set her on the camel, and we are not called upon to dismount at all. It is the power of the Holy Ghost able to bear the whole church of God right through the desert, and bring her safely to Him from whom He came. Oh that we yielded ourselves more to that power.

The third type of the Holy Spirit we have in "the men that were with him." It sets forth protection. We need protection. They were in danger of robbers, and in danger of wild beasts, but not in real danger at all, because Eliezer had taken the precaution to bring a protection sufficient to convoy the bride through the desert. Do you

not think it is enough? If you follow the guidance of the Holy Ghost you need no other protection. The Lord Jesus Christ when here was led of the Spirit into the wilderness, and was there forty days with the wild beasts. He was perfectly safe because led of the Spirit; and when led of the Spirit we have no need to fear. The blessed God pledges Himself to the protection of that person who yields himself to the guidance of the Holy Ghost. Thus it is of immense importance that we get His guidance. "I will guide thee with mine eye." He tells the Laodiceans to anoint their eyes with eye salve, &c. Get the guidance of God, look up to His eye; He can see what is before you, and He will look down to you and shew you where to go. It is intelligent guidance. It is not like a blind man putting his hand into the hand of another, and not knowing where he is going, that is unintelligent guidance. It is like a child with his father: the little child looks at his father, and if the father looks back "an assent" he goes

on with what he is doing ; if he looks "no" he stops : he is guided intelligently. That is what we want ; if we get that, we have protection through the desert. We get protection from the devil in that sense and his wiles. I believe the church is a wonderful place of protection. Only commit yourself to the guidance of the Spirit, and you have His protection.

But we want something more than that, more than the earnest and power, and protection. We want comfort, and to know what is going on in that scene, and we have the Comforter in the man Eliezer. Two things characterise a man in scripture, love and intelligence. That is what the apostle wants for the Corinthians. (Chaps. xiii., xiv.) Intelligence and love should always go together ; they must never be divorced. You have them here in Eliezer. He has perfect intelligence of the scene he came from ; he pours into Rebekah's heart tales of Isaac, his glories, his riches, and Rebekah is comforted and satisfied.

If she gets discontented, if her heart turns back to the scene whence she came, it is a miserable condition of things. If the Christian is not going on in heart with God, with the joys of the coming day before him, he is of all men most miserable. A Christian out of communion, turning back to what he once professed to give up, is a most miserable man. The prophet said that Israel should be a burdensome stone to all nations, where God would send them, because of their unbelief. Look, too, at Jonah, and see how he brought trouble wherever he went when away from God. He had to be cast out of the ship, and even the fish could not rest till he had got rid of him. It may seem a ludicrous illustration, but it is true. So a Christian out of communion, with his heart set upon the world, is a much more miserable man than the mere worldling. He is miserable because he is not in communion with Christ, and knows that Christ desires this. Christ's company is more than all He gives.

The Lord said, when the Holy Ghost came He should bring all things to their remembrance. You cannot believe that Eliezer would not pour into her heart all that he could tell of Isaac. The Lord give us to know what that is!

Now they draw nigh to the end of the journey, and another comes upon the scene (ver. 62); Isaac comes from the well "Lahai-roi." That well is first mentioned in connection with Hagar, when she was in the desert, having fled from Sarai. "Beer-lahai-roi—the well of him that liveth and seeth me," she names it. (Gen. xvi. 14.) That is a wonderful place. Christ comes from the way of that well. Mark, He lives and sees us. Think of the eyes of Christ following us as we go through the desert. It is the time that the bride is expected, and it is eventide. The heart of Isaac goes out in anticipation of that moment. So *Christ* lives; *He* sees us. May be we are toiling through the desert, may be we are not in the condition that the Father's provision would enable us to be in. The

poor church does not come out of the desert leaning upon the arm of her Beloved. The whole thing, as we see it, is dislocated and out of joint. Yet the other side is perfectly true; Christ lives and sees us as we come. He anticipates the moment. If the heart of the bride is slothful, there is no sloth on Christ's part. The expectation of all heaven is towards that moment when Christ shall get His bride. (1 Thess. iv.) When that moment arrives all heaven is interested in it. The Lord Himself descends with a shout (it is the shout of a general who assembles his troops); the voice of the archangel. He utters his voice, all the angels follow their chief; and then there is the trump of God. I do not know whom else you have in heaven. All are interested in that moment. I ask, What is all earth about? To come nearer home, What is the church about? Alas for us, beloved friends, it is not so! But what we have here is true, and it is enough to awaken reciprocal affection in our hearts. The Lord lives and sees

us. Does He see us coming up out of the wilderness leaning on the arm of our Beloved? Is it thus with us?

Well, they come. Depend upon it, the moment is near when the Lord will have His bride. You get intelligence on the part of Rebekah. She alights from the camel, &c. (Vers. 64, 65.) You have the moment of meeting. No more any desert; she has passed through the desert; and Isaac is coming. She makes herself meet for him. "She took a veil and covered herself." It seems to me to set forth the fact (though in type only), that when "we see him we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." Though, no doubt, we must be like Him to see Him. He shall change our vile bodies and fashion them like unto His body of glory. We shall see the Saviour. Then what follows? He takes her unto his mother's tent, and he loved her, &c. It is not here the love of pity, nor—though the love is the same now—is the expression of it the same as it will be: it is the love of consummated relation-

ship. In a sense we have relationship now, but it is not yet consummated. We have Christ for ever, for eternity!

How much are our hearts going on in this way? Knowing the Holy Ghost as the Earnest, carried by His power, satisfied with His protection, comforted by His taking the things of Christ, and shewing them unto us. What do we want with the world? We find so much of going down to the world for help. It is all infidelity as to the fact of the provision the Lord has made for us down here. May He make us more simple as to it! More simple as to the work of redemption; more simple as to trusting Him for all the way; more simple in the going out of heart to Him who has done all for us, sharing now in the joy of His heart; able then to share His joy and be with Him for ever.

We say the desert is weary because of its length; but what is the future before us? There is no future but the glory! As an old woman said at her apple stall, when asked how many steps

there were into glory : “ Three, sir. (1), out of self ; (2), into Christ ; (3), into glory.” That is the next step—*glory*.

The Lord give us to accept it, that we may have our joy as Christ has His, for His own blessed Name’s sake !

G. J. S.

