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**IBT DOC 001 - REBEKAH**

**Rebecca is one of the most impressive women in the bible, contrary to popular opinion**

Listening to most explicators/preachers/teachers of the bible, you’d think Rebecca, the wife of Isaac was just a scheming mother who deceived her husband for the selfish goal of helping her favorite child. This is wrong, unbiblical, and highly misleading for young women needing a mentor or example for godly living as a woman. Rebecca is one of the most godly women you’ll find in scripture, and women will find in her a model for life as a wife and mother. It is a bias based on a moral standard that modern moralistic Christians claim is higher than God’s standard in the bible.

Rebecca, at an extremely young age, understood the value of following Christ and seeking first the kingdom. She was kind, a servant of extraordinary capacity, and sought God and His kingdom above all. How can I say that? It is clear that Abraham’s family, even those who stayed behind in the land from which he came, was more godly than anyone else Abraham knew of. He sent his servant there to get a wife for Isaac: “But thou shalt go unto my country, and to my kindred, and take a wife unto my son Isaac.” Gen. 24:4. Abraham strictly forbad his servant from taking a wife for Isaac from anywhere else. “. . . thou shalt not take a wife unto my son of the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell: . . . .” Gen. 24:3.

The servant of Abraham sought a woman who was of a servant heart, for he prayed:

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.

Gen. 24:12-14. And that is exactly what Rebecca did when she arrived, directly after he prayed this prayer. You don’t feed a camel water just to fill his stomach. To do that for just one camel would be quite a job, so doing so for ten camels was an even greater job. But camels don’t just drink to fill their stomachs; they fill their humps also. Rebecca offered to go the extra mile for Abraham’s servant, a total stranger by the way.

 But that servant heart is not all that commends Rebecca. When he saw that his prayer was answered, he gave Rebecca two golden bracelets and a golden earring. To come with no dowry would have been a waste of time on the part of the servant. The only other assurance Rebecca had of the quality of family into which she was marrying was the servant’s statement: “And he said, Blessed [be] the LORD God of my master Abraham, who hath not left destitute my master of his mercy and his truth: I [being] in the way, the LORD led me to the house of my master's brethren.” Gen. 24:17

 Upon the servant explaining the prayer and all that happened to Rebecca and her family, particularly her brother Laban, Laban responded:

Then Laban and Bethuel answered and said, The thing proceedeth from the LORD: 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 the LORD hath spoken.

Gen. 24:50-1. The very next day, Laban and Rebecca’s mother engaged in this conversation with the servant:

And her brother and her mother said, Let the damsel abide with us [a few] days, at the least ten; after that she shall go. And he said unto them, Hinder me not, seeing the LORD hath prospered my way; send me away that I may go to my master. And they said, We will call the damsel, and enquire at her mouth.

Gen. 24:55-7. For some reason, they were trying to delay Rebecca’s departure. Maybe they wanted some gift from the servant or were sentimental about her departing.

 Rebecca, who in that culture and time was probably a young teenager, had this attitude: “And they called Rebekah, and said unto her, Wilt thou go with this man? And she said, I will go.” She was like Peter and John, who when called by Jesus to follow Him, dropped their nets and followed. She left her family, her home, the land she knew to go to a strange land about a thousand miles away, to a husband she’d never met, and marry into the family of Abraham, the friend of God. She looked for a kingdom not of the familiar, not of this world, you could say. She walked by faith.

 Her character is also revealed in her dealings with her twin children.

And the children struggled together within her; and she said, If [it be] so, why [am] I thus? And she went to enquire of the LORD. And the LORD said unto her, Two nations [are] in thy womb, and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels; and [the one] people shall be stronger than [the other] people; and the elder shall serve the younger.

Gen. 25:22-3. She took this word to heart, and the scripture treats it seriously also.

I have loved you, saith the LORD. Yet ye say, Wherein hast thou loved us? [Was] not Esau Jacob's brother? saith the LORD: yet I loved Jacob, And I hated Esau, and laid his mountains and his heritage waste for the dragons of the wilderness. Whereas Edom saith, We are impoverished, but we will return and build the desolate places; thus saith the LORD of hosts, They shall build, but I will throw down; and they shall call them, The border of wickedness, and, The people against whom the LORD hath indignation for ever.

Mal. 1:2-4. “As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.” Rom. 9:13.

Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble [you], and thereby many be defiled; Lest there [be] any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright. For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.

Heb. 12:15-7.

 Rebecca did not exercise a selfish favoritism toward Jacob; she exercised favor toward the godly seed versus the ungodly. It was Isaac who exercised an ungodly, selfish favoritism toward Esau by ignoring God’s word about the elder. In fact, after forty years with Isaac and Esau and after seeing their character revealed for that forty years, Isaac, for the sake of his belly, still clung to his preference for Esau over Jacob, God’s chosen one. “And Isaac loved Esau, because he did eat of [his] venison: but Rebekah loved Jacob.” Gen. 25:28.

 What were a couple of the ways in which Esau revealed his character? First, “Esau despised [his] birthright.” Gen. 25:34. Second, unlike Abraham, his grandfather, he cared not whom he married. “And Esau was forty years old when he took to wife Judith the daughter of Beeri the Hittite, and Bashemath the daughter of Elon the Hittite: Which were a grief of mind unto Isaac and to Rebekah.” Gen. 26:34-5. He chose his wives from the women of the land, whom Abraham forbad his servant from finding a wife for Isaac.

 One incident reveals each twin’s character especially well. After working in the field and when “he [was] faint,” Esau demanded that Jacob give him some stew he had made. In response to Esau’s demand, Jacob responded fairly (paraphrasing): “Pay me something for my stew.” In modern parlance, Jacob might have said, “For a million dollars,” and Esau would have thought it a joke and said, “Yeah, right.” But that would have been a sarcastic response which really meant: “Not in a million years.” But what Jacob asked for was not a million dollars; it was something much more valuable. It was the heritage, the inheritance, the promises of God to Abraham, the grandfather. Isaac inherited God’s promises and the property given to Abraham by God. Jacob recognized its value and after forty years, knew his brother’s character, his lack of appreciation for what was truly valuable. Otherwise, why else would he have even posed the deal. And it was a deal, not a fraud or cheat or theft as some seem to allege that it was. Esau’s response reveals his lack of respect for the heritage of Abraham:

And Esau said, Behold, I [am] at the point to die: and what profit shall this birthright do to me? And Jacob said, Swear to me this day; and he sware unto him: and he sold his birthright unto Jacob. Then Jacob gave Esau bread and pottage of lentiles; and he did eat and drink, and rose up, and went his way: thus Esau despised [his] birthright.

 Gen. 25:32-4. Jacob gave something of value to Esau – the stew, and Esau paid for it with something of value – the birthright. Esau critically undervalued the birthright.

 But that’s not all. It was Esau who wanted to cheat Jacob. Esau thought his word meant nothing. He thought he could promise the birthright to Jacob, and no one, not even God, would hold him to it. Thus, Esau was godless. Esau thought he could take Jacob’s stew at no cost, and that he would owe Jacob nothing. Unlike Jesus, who said that “by your words you will be justified and by your words you’ll be condemned,” Esau thought his word meant nothing but what he intended. “Who will prove I promised it? Who will hold me to it? It’s an invisible thing, so it doesn’t matter what I promise.” Jacob saw the invisible – the birthright was not something that could be seen. Esau saw only the stew.

 The culminating event that demonstrates the character of Rebecca, and Isaac for that matter, was the blessing ceremony of Gen. 27. Just like a king is not legally the monarch until the official ceremony of coronation occurs, so the firstborn, Esau, could not claim his rightful place as the heir of Isaac, and logically of Abraham, until the blessing ceremony. This was a ceremony that had to occur, for Isaac was concerned enough to set it up “that my soul may bless thee before I die.” Gen. 27:4. Horror of horrors that it was so close to occurring. Isaac was about to hand over the legacy of the godly line, the heritage of the Hebrews who were God’s chosen people, the ancestry of Jesus Christ Himself, the future of the line of the Messiah to a murderer at heart, a cheat, a person whom the bible calls “ungodly” or “profane.” Heb. 12:16.

 Rebecca recognized the danger.

And Rebekah spake unto Jacob her son, saying, Behold, I heard thy father speak unto Esau thy brother, saying, Bring me venison, and make me savoury meat, that I may eat, and bless thee before the LORD before my death. Now therefore, my son, obey my voice according to that which I command thee.

Gen. 27:6-8. She has to stop the ceremony that would place a profane or ungodly man on the throne, so to speak, of the family. It was a dishonor to Abraham, to whom Rebecca was related by marriage and which she obviously took seriously, for this to occur. It was also a denial of God’s word. Remember at the birth, God told her: “the elder shall serve the younger.” Gen. 25:23. Rebecca had remained faithful to that word, but Isaac seemed to despise it.

 Then there was the problem of the Canaanite wives that Esau had taken. What beliefs, what practices from the land (the land by the way that God would soon consider so abominable that He would command Joshua and the Israelites to destroy every last inhabitant, including the infants) would they have passed down through the seed of promise? And yes, what about the Messiah. The following words would have rung in the ears, jarring the sensibilities about God and His plan, throughout the ages – “the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Esau.” Can you imagine? And because Isaac was so obstinate and wicked in preferring Esau over Jacob that the ceremony would have occurred in spite of God choosing Jacob from the womb, telling Rebecca by his word of promise that Jacob was the son of promise, and in spite of all the havoc it would have wreaked throughout history . . . but for Rebecca.

 Why didn’t she step up and speak with Isaac about the problem? Decades had gone by, the two sons had revealed their character, and Isaac had God’s word, spoken at the birth of the two boys. What more did he need? What could Rebecca have said to change his mind, if all that could not? Perhaps they had spoken of it. Remember Rebecca with the servant’s camels; her character was generous, kind, servant-like. This is not some women’s-libber who defies her husband. But she knew him, and she knew this was the only way to stop the dreadful act that Isaac, an old, blind man, was about to commit. He had been stubbornly committed to Esau for decades. This was not something that a conversation could dislodge, and Rebecca knew it.

 Some accuse her of lack of faith, saying, “Well, if it truly was God’s will that Jacob would be the chosen son, then why didn’t she trust Him to work it out instead of taking things in her own hands?” You could say the same thing about King David. Why did David stop the installation of his son, Adonijah, who was not the heir of the throne, and have Zadok and Nathan and Benaiah install his son, Solomon, on the throne before Adonijah could install himself? I Kings 1:5.-43 Because the ceremony was the legal installation, and Adonijah would have been the publicly acknowledged king because David’s will and choice of heir was not legally and publicly instituted. The giving of the blessing to Esau would have been the public institution of the heir of the Abrahamic promises; it was not something that could be reversed.

 She exercised her faith this way. When Jacob objected to her plan to deceive Isaac and claimed he might earn a curse instead of a blessing, she said, “And his mother said unto him, Upon me [be] thy curse, my son: only obey my voice, . . . .” Gen. 27:13. Some claim she was cursed and died young, while Jacob was still in another country, as a result of her deception. However, this cannot be the case. The curse could only be uttered and issued by Isaac, the lord of the family and legitimate holder of the Abrahamic blessing. After he realized he had been deceived, did he utter a curse upon Rebecca or Jacob? “And Isaac trembled very exceedingly, and said, Who? where [is] he that hath taken venison, and brought [it to] me, and I have eaten of all before thou camest, and have blessed him? yea, [and] he shall be blessed.” Gen. 27:33. Isaac apparently knew by the Spirit that something had been accomplished in the divine realm, for he said, “and] he shall be blessed.” Isaac knew he had been deceived: “And he said, Thy brother came with subtilty, and hath taken away thy blessing.” Gen. 27:35. Nevertheless, when it came time directly after this event to send Jacob to Rebecca’s family to find a wife, Isaac uttered not even a word of chastisement, much less one of cursing.

And Isaac called Jacob, and blessed him, and charged him, and said unto him, Thou shalt not take a wife of the daughters of Canaan. Arise, go to Padanaram, to the house of Bethuel thy mother's father; and take thee a wife from thence of the daughters of Laban thy mother's brother. And God Almighty bless thee, and make thee fruitful, and multiply thee, that thou mayest be a multitude of people; And give thee the blessing of Abraham, to thee, and to thy seed with thee; that thou mayest inherit the land wherein thou art a stranger, which God gave unto Abraham.

Gen. 28:1-4.

 Nor did Isaac chastise or curse Rebecca. In essence, Isaac repented. He now favored Jacob, having seen the error of his way, when Rebecca stopped him from stubbornly going on with his folly of passing the inheritance to Esau. Therefore, to allege Rebecca was cursed because she died relatively young completely without scriptural support merely proves my assertion that modern Christians have been biased against her because of their commitment to their own moral standard instead of God’s standard in scripture.

 Summing up Rebecca’s character, we can say that the small amount written about her shows her to be extremely kind, generous, and having a servant heart. She also respected God’s word, being willing to choose one child over the other contrary to motherly instincts, for the sake of God’s kingdom and the godly seed/line. Respecting the invisible world, she also understood the power of the ceremonies that the men in that godly line could accomplish. She kept faith with the God of Abraham, even though she was not a natural descendant of Abraham, even when the heir, Isaac, had lost his way and become “blind” to the ramifications of his irrational, self-serving attachment to Esau. She preserved the Messianic line almost single-handedly during the generation of Isaac and ensured that it passed to Jacob, who also followed his mother’s example by leaving all to find a wife outside Canaan for the sake of that godly heritage.