

ISAAC

Genesis 25:19-28; Hebrews 11:20

Intro: Most of the book of Genesis is taken up telling us about the lives of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were in the family line which ultimately led to the Lord Jesus Christ. Joseph was not in that line although he was a son of Jacob. The family line leading to Christ was through Judah even though he was not Jacob's firstborn son. We can only guess as to why Judah was passed over in favor of Joseph. Judah was involved in the story of Joseph, but really only one chapter is given to Judah. That is chapter 38. It tells of Judah's disgraceful behavior with his daughter-in-law, plus the fact that initially he married a Canaanite. Perhaps these facts coupled with the fact that Joseph is such an amazing type of Christ explains why the book of Genesis concludes with the story of Joseph instead of Judah. But these are only guesses on my part, and I want you to take them as guesses.

Isaac, you will remember was *a miracle child*. He was born to Abraham and Sarah after they were really too old to have children. We read about his birth in Genesis 21. In Genesis 24 we see what Abraham did to get a bride for Isaac. Her name was Rebekah. Sarah, Isaac's mother, died before her son married. Rebekah was actually Sarah's niece, and so it is possible that Sarah knew about her even though it seems certain that Sarah never saw her future daughter-in-law. However, even in the life of Isaac there is not very much that is commendable, but we can learn even from his failures as well as his good times or they would not have been in this record of Isaac's life which the Holy Spirit led Moses to write.

The story of Isaac is not found in one compact section of Genesis. We read about his birth, as I have said, in Genesis 21, and then we read of his death in Genesis 35:29, the last verse of that chapter. But that was after Jacob's trouble with Esau when Jacob left home because Esau was going to kill him. And it was after Jacob had married four wives: Leah and her handmaid Zilpah, and Rachel and her handmaid Bilhah, And he had children by all of them. But in between chapters 21 and 35, we have very little space that is actually devoted to Isaac. He died when he was 180 years old (see Gen. 35:28). There are, nevertheless, certain details from which we can learn.

I hope you will remember that it was when Abraham was ninety-nine years old, twenty-four years after he and Sarah had come into Canaan, and

we do not know how many years it was from the time that Abraham left his home in Ur until he left Haran after his father died. So it had been more than twenty-four years since God had originally given Abraham the promise that he was going to have a son from which God would make a mighty nation.

So we can see that:

I. ISAAC WAS A SON OF PROMISE, GOD'S PROMISE.

It looked like God had waited too long to fulfill His promise because all during the time that He had made Abraham and Sarah wait, they were, of course, getting older by the day, until they were ninety-nine and eighty-nine respectively. But it was at that point that the Lord appeared to Abraham and told him that "Sarah shall bear unto thee at this set time in the next year" (Gen. 17:21). When the Lord told Abraham that Sarah would have a child, he laughed (Gen. 17:17). And then when Abraham told Sarah that she would have a son, she laughed too (Gen. 18:12). It seemed like such an event would be totally impossible to them. But when Isaac was born, it was "at the set time of which God had spoken to him," *i.e.*, to Abraham. See Gen. 21:1.

The Lord did what he said he would do. He gave Abraham and Sarah a son. And He did it at the very time that He said that He would. What greater evidence could we possibly want, or need, of the faithfulness of God. This was evidence also of the greatness of His power. We are inclined to feel that when things become impossible for us, that they are also impossible to God. Or when it seems that God has waited too long, then we feel the Lord is not going to answer our prayers, or that it is too late for Him to do anything.

I am reading a book now written by a Puritan on the subject of meditation. And in talking about the many, many things that we need to be meditating on, one of his main points is that we should meditate on the promises of God. This was an amazing thing that God did for Abraham and Sarah, and even when they had gotten beyond that place that He would do what He had said He would do. But the Lord did it anyway, and He brought Abraham and Sarah to the place, according to Romans 4 and Hebrews 11 where they believed it too.

God is faithful! God is faithful to you and to me. Even when we do not

believe, He remains faithful because He cannot deny Himself. See 2 Tim. 2:13. I would like to know how often Isaac thought about God's dealings with his parents, how his parents were blessed by God's ways with them.

Secondly, I want to point out to you,

II. HOW ISAAC GOT HIS WIFE.

That is one of the most wonderful stories in the Bible. You will find it in Genesis 24. To deal with that would take a separate message. But let me just pick a few details out of that chapter for our blessing.

Genesis 25:20 tells us that Isaac was forty year old when he married Rebekah. And it was an arranged marriage. I mean by that, that Abraham sent one of his servants back home where he had come from to get a wife for his son. The servant was told not to do three things:

- 1) He was not to take a wife for Isaac from the Canaanites who were all around them. They were heathen people, and Abraham did not want Isaac to have a wife who would not share his faith.
- 2) Under no circumstances was Isaac to be taken back to his father's homeland. There would always have been the possibility that Isaac would have stayed. But he belonged in the land God had given to his father.
- 3) If the woman whom the servant found in answer to prayer, would not come with him, he was not to look for anyone else. Abraham not only believed that the will of God for marriage is not just one man for one woman, but that it was a particular woman for a particular man. It was not just any woman for any man, but Abraham believed that God Who orders our steps, has arranged for our marriage as well.

All the time Isaac was learning as the plans were made for the servant to go to get a wife for him. But I want you to notice a wonderful thing about Isaac, as he waited for the servant to return. And you will find it in Genesis 24:63. "Isaac went out to meditate in the field at eventide." This is the only time the Hebrew word for "meditate" is used in all of the OT. Its meaning is uncertain. It can simply mean that he went for a walk. But the context would seem to support the idea that he went out where he could be by himself to think, or to meditate, and some ancient versions even suggest that for Isaac this was a time of prayer. He had a big interest in his father's project. Obviously Abraham was seeking the Lord's blessing for his son, and it would be wonderful to think that Isaac went out to meditate and to pray, asking the Lord to guide the servant to

the very woman who was to be his wife. If this is the case, it is a shame that Isaac did not keep up that practice throughout his life. At any rate, Rebekah arrived with the servant, and Isaac fell in love with her immediately. And having Rebekah comforted him after his mother's death.

The next thing we read about is:

III. ISAAC'S FAMILY.

Isaac and Rebekah were unable to have children. This was before medical science had come up with ways to help so that a wife could have a family. Even today those efforts are not always successful. But in Isaac and Rebekah's day the only One they had to turn to was the Lord. And so we read in Genesis 25:21 that "Isaac intreated the Lord for his wife." But that is not all that we read. We read in the same verse that "the Lord was intreated of him, and Rebekah his wife conceived." "Intreated" –what does that mean? It is the same word in both cases.

It is a word which speaks of man worshiping God, but the two together means that Isaac prayed, and the Lord listened to him, and gave him what he wanted. This is an OT illustration of 1 John 5:14-15, "And this is the confidence that we have in Him, . . ." We know that it was important for the godly family line leading ultimately to Christ needed to continue. How much of this Isaac understood, we do not know. But we do know that the Lord moved him to pray this prayer for a child, *and the Lord gave him two at the same time*. Twins were born. But they were anything but identical. They did not look alike, nor were their interests the same. But here we come to a big mistake that Isaac made, and Rebekah made the same mistake. Isaac loved Esau, it is said, because Esau was a hunter, and when he would come in from hunting, he would make a stew which Isaac really loved! There was nothing very spiritual about any of this, was there?

The twins names were Esau and Jacob. Before they were born, and before they had done anything either good or bad, Rebekah had been told that the older one would serve the young one. That is, the normal blessing that usually went to the firstborn, who was Esau, would go to Jacob. In this God was exercising His own sovereignty. We see this often in Scripture. Instead of Cain, the blessing went to Seth. In the case of Jacob's son, the blessing did not go to #1 Reuben, but to #4 Judah. In the case of David, he was the youngest in the family. So the Lord as God

has the right to choose the one he wants. In fact, he usually sets aside that which is customary, to show His authority in exercising his own will. The doctrine of election is an illustration of this. God chooses whomever He is pleased to choose. That is His right as God, and none of us has the right to make Him explain why He does what He does.

The sad fact about the family of Isaac and Rebekah is that it was a divided family. Isaac was not a strong father, and he was more inclined to be influenced by his love for food than he was for the love of God's will.

Now it all came to a focus over the birthright and the blessing of the first-born.

IV. THE BIRTHRIGHT AND THE BLESSING.

Do you all know that Dr. Bruce Waltke has written a commentary on the book of Genesis? Well, he has, and like his public ministry, he is not only good about the interpretation of Scripture, but he is also excellent on the application of Scripture to the hearts of his readers for their daily walk with the Lord.

He says that the distinction between the birthright and the blessing is not really clear. The book of Hebrews seems to put them together. Let me read to you from Hebrews 12:14-17 so that you will see how the Spirit of God interpreted the situation we are considering in the book of Genesis. Here is what the writer of Hebrews said:

14 Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord:

15 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;

16 Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright.

17 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. 12:14-17).

Isaac is a disappointment to us when it came to guiding his family according to the will of God. He seems to have forgotten what the Lord told Rebekah before their sons were born, or he was so blinded by his love and his preference for Esau that he was following the dictate of his own heart

instead of by the revelation of God, or we would say, instead of following the Word of God.

The first mistake was made by Jacob. Esau had come in from the field, it says, probably from a hunting trip. He was tired and hungry. Jacob had made some pottage, and Esau asked for some. Jacob told him that he would give him some of the pottage if he would sell him his birthright. Esau said that he was going to die if he didn't get something to eat, and so he took an oath saying that Jacob could have his birthright. So Jacob got the birthright, and Esau got his food. This is all in the latter part of Genesis 25.

We know from what the Lord told Rebekah before Esau and Jacob were born, that the birthright would be given to Jacob. *But how God would have given it to him, we will never know. I call this one of the unwritten chapters of the Bible. If Jacob had only been patient, the Lord would have given him the birthright and it probably would not have caused all of the trouble that it did.* We do know that the birthright meant that Jacob would be the real heir to the headship of the family when his father died, a position which he evidently wanted very much.

But then we move on to Genesis 27 where we read that Isaac thought that he was going to die, and so he called for Esau to prepare that stew which Isaac loved, and that he would give him the blessing. Now this was contrary to what God had revealed to Rebekah, and which she must have told Isaac as to God's will for their sons. Now Rebekah heard what Isaac was going to do, and she panicked. She called Jacob in and told him what Isaac had told Esau that he was going to do. So Rebekah told Jacob to bring her meat and she would prepare the dish that Isaac loved so much. Then Jacob would take it in to his father before Esau got back, pretending to be Esau, but he would get the blessing, and not Esau.

Jacob knew that he and his brother were so different physically, that even though Isaac at this point was blind, he would feel him, and touch his smooth skin and know that he was not Esau. Esau was very hairy even on his arms and hands. Rebekah knew how she would correct that. She would take the skins of animals on his hands and on his neck so that Isaac would think that he was Esau.

Jacob was very uneasy about the whole plan, and he said this to his mother, words which you will find in Genesis 27:11 and 12:

11 And Jacob said to Rebekah his mother, Behold, Esau my brother is a hairy man, and I am a smooth man:

12 My father peradventure will feel me, and I shall seem to him as a deceiver; and I shall bring a curse upon me, and not a blessing (Gen. 27:11-12).

But notice what his mother said: “Upon me be thy curse, my son: only obey my voice, and go fetch me them” (Gen. 27:13).

What she wanted, God’s blessing upon Jacob, was right, but the way she went about it was all wrong. Again, how God would have carried out His will, we do not know, and probably never will know. But Rebekah’s plan worked out. Jacob went in with the delicious food, disguised as Esau, and he got the blessing before Esau got back home. But what were the results?

Esau got so mad that he decided to kill Jacob just as soon as their father died. The blessing could not be reversed, so there was really nothing else that Esau could do, even though he plead with tears that he might have the blessing. I have a hunch that the blessing included money, and that may be the reason that Jacob sought later to appease Esau with an outrageous number of animals.

Jacob has to leave home his mother said, “for a few days,” until Esau cooled off. But Jacob was gone for twenty years, and when he got home his father was still alive, but nothing is said about his mother. And so we assume that she died and never saw her son Jacob after the day when she sent him to her brother’s home.

Rebekah wanted the will of God, but she was totally ignorant of the ways of the Lord. And a large part of that was that she did not know the Lord the way she should.

Concl: There is much given in the book of Genesis that I have not covered, like when he lied about his wife when they were in Gerar just like his father had done twice. It showed his lack of faith. But our time this morning will have been spent wisely if each one of us has been impressed with the need to know God and His ways. We all are inclined either to overlook the will of God, like Isaac did, or to run ahead of God, like Rebekah did, instead of waiting on the Lord, believing that He never forgets His promises, and He is perfectly able to see His will carried out even though we can’t see how He is going to do it. We all need to learn

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to trust God, and to wait patiently for Him. We will be amazed to see what He can do. And when we wait for Him, then we will have no regrets.

Remember Psalm 37:7:

7 Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for him: fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way, because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass.

Also Proverbs 3:5-6, "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and ..."

And then there is Isaiah 55: