

Genesis 25:19-34 – Despising The Promise and Squandering The Birthright

I. The Birth of The Promised Line (19-26)

A. God Provides Isaac's Seed (19-21)

1. The Record (Toledoth) of Isaac (19)
2. The Age of Isaac At His Marriage (20)
 - a. Isaac is 40 years old at his marriage
 - b. Rebecca's lineage is given
 - i. Reminding us of God's intervention in finding Isaac's wife
 - ii. This info will be important in the life of Jacob, as he flees to Paddan Aram – to Laban (where he will find his wife)

3. The Miraculous Pregnancy (21)

- a. Isaac Prays For Rebecca's Barrenness (21a)
 - i. Rebecca (like Sarah) is Barren – the “promised line” has a lot of trouble having children
 - Why is God making child-bearing so difficult for His chosen family? (Rachael and Jacob will have trouble also)
 - All Isaac's brothers are having kids and he has none
 - ii. Isaac prays to God about Rebecca's barrenness
 - Isaac had heard the story of Hagar and Ishmael –
 - Abraham had probably recounted his mistake to Isaac many times
 - Isaac does not make the same mistake, but prays that God would intervene
- b. God Answers Isaac's Prayer (21b)
 - i. Notice: This happens within a single verse, but we are told that Isaac married at 40, and the twins were born when he was 60 (see v. 26)
 - ii. Isaac prayed about Rebecca's barrenness for 20 years before his prayer was answered
 - He was faithfully consistent
 - He was trusting that God heard him

B. God Foretells The Coming Seed (22-23)

1. Rebecca Inquires About Her Difficult Pregnancy (22)

- a. The Children “smashed together” within her
 - i. The word speaks of a violent collision – they smashed or crushed together – her womb was their battlefield
 - ii. Remember, she doesn't yet know she is having twins, all she knows is that she is having incredible pain

- b. Rebecca Seeks Wisdom From God
 - i. Rebecca and Isaac have been praying for 20 years
 - ii. She finally gets pregnant, and she can tell something is wrong
 - iii. She inquires of the Lord
 - Why am I like this?
 - Why am I having this much trouble?
 - Why did you even allow me to get pregnant?
2. Rebecca is Given an Oracle About Her Children (23)
 - a. Twins Will Be Separated From Her Womb
 - i. The Twins will be fathers of two nations
 - God reveals that there are twins in her womb
 - God reveals that each of the boys will be fathers of different nations
 - ii. The two nations will be against each other
 - God reveals that the two nations will be divided from each other (i.e. They will oppose one another)
 - b. The Younger Will Be Favored Over The Older (23)
 - i. God chooses the younger to carry the line of promise
 - ii. God will not allow any man-made assumption to govern the line of His promise
 - Tradition says that the first born would be the rightful heir
 - Family lineage says that since both sons came from Isaac, both were part of God's promise
 - God alone chooses who bears His promise
 - NOTE: This is Paul's point in Romans 9 – The Jews believed they were "God's people" simply because they came from Abraham and Isaac. Paul shows that it is not being a fleshly descendent that conveys the promise
 - Romans 9:6-13 - *Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect. For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel: Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called. That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the*

promise are counted for the seed. For this is the word of promise, At this time will I come, and Sara shall have a son. And not only this; but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac; (For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;) -- It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.

iii. God fulfills the promise – He will not allow credit to go to time, chance, tradition, effort, or lineage. God alone gets the glory for the fulfillment.

C. God Brings Forth Two Sons For Isaac (24-26)

1. Rebecca Delivers Twins (24)
2. Esau is Born First (25)
 - a. He is red and hairy – Esau means “hairy”
3. Jacob is Born Second (26)
 - a. Jacob’s hand grabs Esau’s heel as he comes out
 - i. It is almost as if they continue to struggle coming out of the womb
 - b. The word Jacob sounds like the word “heel” – Jacob is from the word “to protect” – Later it came to mean “heel-grabber” or “supplanter”

4. Isaac is sixty years old at their Birth

II. The Birthright is Despised By Esau (27-34)

A. The Twins are Completely Different (27-28)

1. Esau is a Hunter and Outdoorsman (27a)
 - a. Esau is a man’s man. He is portrayed as stronger and confident
 - b. Esau is a rugged mountain man – a leader
 - c. By all rights Esau seems like the clear choice of Isaac’s heir
 - i. Did Rebecca tell anyone of God’s announcement that “the older would serve the younger?”
 - ii. Isaac clearly favors Esau over Jacob
2. Jacob is a Plain Man (Sophisticated? Peaceful?) (27b)
 - a. Jacob dwells in tents – he is not pictured as a leader or capable man
 - b. Jacob almost seems like a “mama’s boy”
3. Isaac Favors Esau Because He Has a Taste For Game (28a)
 - a. Isaac is said to love Esau “because he ate of his venison”
 - b. Isaac and Esau both loved the taste of game
 - c. Isaac favors Esau because of their similarities

- i. This doesn't mean he didn't love Jacob, he just favored Esau
- 4. Rebecca Favors Jacob (Why?)
 - a. We are not told
 - b. Could it be because Jacob was a tent dweller?
 - c. Could it be because she knew Jacob was the true heir?
- 5. Who would be Isaac's choice for his heir and promise bearer?

The next section shows the character of both twins. Neither one looks particularly good. However, Esau seems more likeable although very misguided. Jacob is portrayed as sneaky.

- B. Esau Values Immediate Needs Over God's Promise (29-32)
 - 1. Esau Comes in Hungry From Hunting (29)
 - a. "Faint" – means weak with hunger
 - b. We would say "starving to death" – Esau probably wasn't on the brink of death, but really hungry
 - c. It is ironic that the skillful hunter comes back with no game
 - 2. Esau Asks To Eat Jacob's Stew (30)
 - a. The word means (red) אֶדֹם (pronounced *ah-dome*)
 - b. "Let me swallow that red – red"
 - c. Esau is given the nickname "Edom" which means "red"
 - i. The nation from Esau would be called the Edomites.
 - 3. Jacob Bargains For Esau's Birthright (31)
 - a. Jacob doesn't hesitate – He knows what he wants
 - b. The birthright of the first born meant a double portion of the inheritance and leadership over the family
 - i. It must have been hard for Jacob to accept – Esau was only a few seconds older
 - c. Does Jacob know the prophecy God told Rebecca before his birth? Is he trying to get his promised birthright by deception?
 - 4. Esau Values His Physical Need Over The Birthright (32)
 - a. Esau is a man ruled by his appetites
 - b. Esau cannot see past his own urges and hunger – he would rather be satisfied now than look forward to the promise
- C. Esau Sells His Birthright For Stew (33-34)
 - 1. Esau Sells His Birthright (33)
 - a. Jacob won't consent until Esau swears an oath
 - b. Esau effectively sells his birthright to Jacob for a bowl of stew
 - 2. Esau Satisfies His Hunger (34a)

3. Esau “Despised” His Birthright
 - a. This means he held it in contempt
 - b. He valued immediate satisfaction rather than waiting for his birthright

Hebrews 12:15-17 - 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.