

Lesson 40
Isaac Receives A Son

Genesis 25:1-34

I. INTRODUCTION

A. This chapter introduces the reader to Jacob, the son of Isaac, who is the choice of God to carry on the Abrahamic Covenant. Isaac now fades into the background and Jacob becomes the leading character in God's program.

B. This chapter also gives the reader good contrast between the believer and unbeliever portrayed in Jacob and Esau. There is a perfect balance between God's sovereignty and man's responsibility.

II. ABRAHAM'S LAST DAYS 25:1-11

A. After the death of Sarah, Abraham chose to remarry. At 140 years old, he married Keturah. This marriage was due to Abraham's realization that he was to beget many children (Gen. 17:4) and also perhaps out of lonesomeness.

B. Keturah's sons became fathers of Arab tribes that peopled the land to the east, southeast, and south of southern Palestine. This was down in Arabia, and near the Gulf of Aqabah and in north and southwestern Arabia.

C. The sons of Abraham's concubines (Hagar and Keturah) received gifts, but Isaac, the covenant son, received the portion of the one possession, the blessing.

D. Abraham died when he was 175 years old, and he was buried in the cave of Machpelah with his wife Sarah by his two sons, Isaac and Ishmael (Heb. 11:13). NOTE. Death in family can often draw the worst of enemies together for a short while.

III. ISHMAEL'S DESCENDANTS (25:12-18): These are Arab people east and northeast of the Jordan River area in Arabia.

IV. ISAAC RECEIVES A SON 25:19-21

A. Isaac was about 50 years old, for he had married Rebekah when he was 40 years old. There was a 20-year period in which no man-child had come into Isaac's home. There was no fulfillment of the divine promise and Isaac had to have a son to carry on the Abrahamic Covenant. NOTE. God undoubtedly brought this situation or testing to Isaac in order to teach him the disciplines of faith. Isaac had to learn that God would fulfill His Covenant in His time and His way. NOTE. This tells us that conception or lack of conception is really in the hands of an omnipotent Creator.

B. Isaac came to the end of himself and his human attempts to fulfill the Covenant, and turned to God in prayer to open the womb of Rebekah. NOTE. So often Christians live the slogan, "When everything else fails, try prayer."

C. God answered the prayer and Rebekah became pregnant. NOTE. The Lord really does answer prayer. We "have not because we ask not."

V. REBEKAH'S DILEMMA 25:22-23

A. In her pregnancy, Rebekah felt a great struggling or jostling within her. At this point, she had no idea that two children (twins) were inside her, nor did she realize that these two children would fight all through life. NOTE. Rebekah understood well that God had a general plan for her life but she did not understand the details of what God was doing through this pregnancy.

B. Rebekah did the right thing. She took the problem to God in prayer, for she wanted understanding of the plan of God for her. The Lord gave her a specific answer and it has profound theological and practical implications.

C. The Lord told her she was to have two sons. The two sons would represent two nations, which would oppose each other. Also the elder (first born) would serve the younger. Even before the birth, God announces His own sovereign choice of the younger, or Jacob, for the place of preeminent blessing. Not only were there physical blessings that accompanied the Abrahamic Covenant, but also there were more important, spiritual blessings. Here again we see the importance of the family of Abraham and the line that leads to the Lord Jesus Christ. Isaac is chosen and Ishmael set aside. Jacob is chosen and Esau set aside. NOTE. The New Testament is a divine commentary on the Old Testament. The Apostle Paul cites this passage to stress the sovereign choice of God to salvation (Rom. 9:10-14). Paul goes beyond the temporal and physical aspects of the covenant and stresses the spiritual and eternal aspects of it. Luepold says,

Paul's use of it (Rom. 9:12) indicates that at the same time the concluding statement ("the elder shall serve the younger") offers general principle holding good for all times in the kingdom of God. For in this kingdom, first of all, every natural advantage of the carnal man is of no account in God's sight in the matter of salvation. The power and the claims of the natural man have to yield precedence to God's choice and election by grace. (H.C. Luepold, *Exposition on Genesis*)

Thomas further comments,

In all this we see the marvel and glory of the Divine sovereignty. Why the younger son should have been chosen instead of the elder we do not know. It is, however, very striking to find the same principle exercised on several other occasions. It is pretty certain that Abraham was not the eldest son of Terah. We know that Isaac was the younger son of Abraham, and that Joseph was not the eldest son of Jacob. All this goes to emphasize the simple but significant fact that the order of nature is not necessarily the order of grace. All through, God desired to display the sovereignty of His grace as contrasted with that which was merely natural in human life. The great problem of Divine sovereignty is of course insoluble by human intellect. It has to be accepted as a simple fact. It should, however, be observed that it is not merely a fact in regard to things spiritual; it is found also in nature in connection with human temperaments and races. All history is full of illustrations of the Divine choice, as we may see from such examples as Cyrus and Pharaoh. Divine election is a fact, whether we can understand it or not. God's purposes are as certain as they are often inscrutable, and it is perfectly evident from the case of Esau and Jacob that the Divine choice of men is entirely independent of their merits or of any pre-vision of their merits or attainments (Rom. 9:11). It is in connection with this subject that we see the real force of St. Paul's striking words when he speaks of God as acting "according to the good pleasure of His will" (Eph. 1:5); and although we are bound to confess the "mystery of His will" (Eph. 1:9), we are also certain that He works all things "after the counsel of His will (Eph. 1:11). There is nothing arbitrary about God and His ways, and our truest wisdom when we cannot

understand His reasons is to rest quietly and trustfully, saying, "Even so, Father, for so it seems good in Thy sight." (W.H. Griffith Thomas, *Genesis*)

- D. Rebekah knew and must have told Isaac what was also his right to know, and he later sought to resist it and impose his own will in preferring Esau (Ch. 27). Undoubtedly Esau and Jacob knew of God's pronouncement as well.

VI. JACOB'S BIRTH 25:24-28

A. Of the twins, the first to be born was Esau (hairy), giving him by natural birth proper claim to the birthright. Jacob was born second, and came out holding Esau's heel. This Jacob means "heeler." Also each boy had favorite parents. Esau was loved by Isaac. Jacob was loved by his mother because of his gentle traits.

B. Esau and Jacob differed physically from the moment of their birth. They had different pursuits in life. Esau superficially had many wonderful traits:

physical specimen of hunter, a rugged outdoorsman, a real man's man. Superficially Esau was a "dream" but he had no spiritual insight whatsoever. Jacob was just the opposite: quiet, cunning, homebody, etc. There was not much outwardly attractive about Jacob but he did have a spiritual capacity for God.

VII. ESAU SELLS JACOB THE BIRTHRIGHT 25:29-34

A. Esau, a man of the world, who thinks only of him and the here and now, came the field famished and wanted food. Jacob, very cunning person, seizes upon the opportunity and gets Esau to sell him the birthright. Esau said, "And what profit shall this birthright do to me?" The birthright gave to man:

1. Priority over his brothers during the father's lifetime (Gen. 27:29).
2. Priority in the inheritance, for he received a double portion (Deut. 21:17).
3. Priority as the head of the family after the father's death (Gen. 35:23; 2 Chron. 21:3).
4. In the case of the promised line for Messiah, it meant the spiritual right for the son to be in the promised line.

Esau saw absolutely no eternal value to the covenant, the temporal aspects were no more important to him than a little stew to satisfy his hunger.

B. Esau failed to attach value to the privilege of preeminent blessing which God valued. He was willing to barter his birthright away as of little worth simply to gratify an appetite of the moment. Esau was materialist and his life was entirely earthbound. He had no eternal values and was intent only on present gratification. God was not in his thoughts. He was a "fornicator" (apostate) "profane" (placed no value on spiritual things) (Heb. 12:16-17). To him the world was everything and God was nothing. Total spiritual incapacity was characteristic of this man.

C. Jacob, by contrast, desired the birthright and showed that he considered it of high value, proving he was a believer. He knew it was his and he sought after it. However, the way he got the birthright is unbecoming of true believer. In the flesh, he operated on the idea that the ends justify the means, and turned to his own devices, human ingenuity and shrewdness to fulfill God's covenant. God had made the choice and God would have gotten the birthright to him one way or another, but Jacob got impatient and tried to help God out. NOTE. Jacob's character was unattractive and even repulsive at times. He was cool and calculating. And yet underneath the surface, he had true appreciation of the spiritual value of the covenant and the birthright. Yet, God had to break Jacob's leg before he learned that all his human conniving in spiritual things were of no worth to God.