

LESSON 12 JACOB OBTAINS THE BIRTHRIGHT

READING: Genesis 25:19-34; 27 and 28; Romans 9:11-13; Hebrews 12:16-17

AIM: To show how Jacob received the blessings in the line of Abraham and Isaac .

1. BACKGROUND

The Lord answered Isaac's prayer on behalf of the childless Rebekah (Gen 25:21). Rebekah and Isaac had twin sons, **Esau** the elder and **Jacob** the younger. At the time of their birth the Lord said unto Rebekah "The elder shall serve the younger". Though twins, Esau and Jacob differed in looks and temperament.

Esau was a cunning hunter, a man of the field. He was an impetuous person, not influenced by godly feelings. Isaac loved Esau because of the venison he prepared for him (Gen. 25:28).

Jacob was a plain, sincere man who dwelt in tents, and constantly meditated on the things of God (Gen. 25:27). The word "plain" is the same word in Hebrew rendered "perfect" in Job 1:1 and means "sincere" or "upright". He was a prudent peaceful man, greatly loved by his mother.

"**Jacob**" means "**supplanter**" and the record of Jacob's life shows how he supplanted all others in whatever he did. When he developed to spiritual maturity (Eph. 4:13) Jacob's name was changed to "**Israel**" - "**Prince with God**" (Gen. 32:28).

2. ESAU SELLS HIS BIRTHRIGHT - Gen. 25:19-34

The eldest son inherited the birthright. His position was one of great respect. When the father died, a double portion of his goods went to the eldest son, who in a sense, took on his father's position. Esau had this right as the elder of the twins.

One day Esau came in from hunting faint and hungry. Jacob was cooking some stew. Esau asked his brother for some of the food. Jacob, taking advantage of his exhausted and hungry state, made him swear to give him the birthright. This Esau did, and then ate and drank.

(1) Esau despised his birthright which God had given him, and traded it for food (Heb. 12:16-17).

(2) Jacob supplanted Esau to secure the birthright (Gen 27:36)

3. JACOB OBTAINS THE BLESSING – Gen: 27:1-40

Isaac grew old and his eyesight failed. He felt that life was drawing to a close and wanted to give the blessing to his elder son. He sent Esau out into the fields to bring him back the venison he loved, that he might eat of it, and then impart the blessing to Esau.

Rebekah heard what Isaac said to Esau and took steps to see that Jacob received the blessing instead of her firstborn son. Having obtained the birthright, Jacob was actually entitled to the blessing. Rebekah prepared a suitable dish, and having disguised Jacob, sent him into his father with the claim that he was in fact Esau.

Isaac at that time appeared to be on the point of death (Gen. 27:1-2) though, in fact, he lived many years after. Although at first he was suspicious, Isaac did not detect the trickery and Jacob thus received the blessing (Gen. 27:28-29). **Nations and his mother's sons were destined to bow to Jacob; those who cursed him would be cursed and those who blessed him would be blessed.**

Esau arrived too late. In bitterness at being again supplanted, he besought a blessing of his father. It was given, but much inferior to the blessing that Jacob received (Gen. 27:39-40) to the point of serving his younger brother as foretold before they were born.

Paul says Esau was moved to tears, but “found no place of repentance” (Heb. 12:17). The word “repentance” means “change”. Esau did not repent or change; he wept and tried to change his father’s mind, but was filled with hatred towards his brother. He remained true to his own evil ways and purposed to kill Jacob.

4. JACOB RECEIVES THE PROMISES ON HIS FLIGHT TO HARAN - Gen. 27:41--28:15

Rebekah feared the anger of Esau, and suggested that Jacob should leave home. She reminded Isaac of the alien marriages of Esau who had married two Hittite (Canaanite) women (Gen. 26:34) and suggested that Jacob find a wife in the family of her kindred in Haran.

Thus Jacob left home through fear of his brother, but at the same time to ensure that he married wisely as his own father before him. Jacob was away from Canaan for 20 years during which time Rebekah died. She did not see her loved son Jacob alive again.

Before Jacob left, Isaac blessed him, expressing the desire that God would confer upon him the Abrahamic promise:

“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, that thou mayest inherit the land which God gave unto Abraham” (Gen 28:3-4)

Jacob journeyed alone to Haran in Padan-aram. When night came he rested in the open field, and with a stone under his head for a pillow, dreamed. He saw a ladder or stairway reaching from the earth to heaven upon which angels ascended and descended. The Lord addressed him and repeated to him the promises given to Abraham and Isaac (Gen. 28:13-15).

5. JACOB’S VOW gen. 28:16-22

The “ladder of faith”, connecting **the promises made by God to men of faith in times long past** with **the Kingdom of God**, showed that the affairs of men and nations are controlled by the angels to the end that all will be fulfilled (see Heb. 1:14; 11:3).

In John 1:51, Jesus identifies himself with the ladder of Jacob’s dream. Christ is the link between heaven and earth, between God and man. He is our mediator and through him we have an approach unto God (I Ti. 2:5; Heb. 12:24).

The dream taught Jacob that God would be with him and his seed until the fulfilment of the promise (Psalm 34:7; Gen 48:16). This is the heritage not only of Jacob, but of all those who seek God. He watches over their affairs for their ultimate benefit, though for a time, they may be tried as Jacob was, and may suffer as he did.

Jacob called the place “**Bethel**” which means “**house of God**”. He erected for a pillar the stone he had used for a pillow and anointed it with oil. Jacob vowed:

- (1) If God would be with him, protect him, provide him with goods and clothing and bring him safely back to his father's house.**
- (2) The Lord would be his God and**
- (3) A tenth of all his possessions would be given to God.**

6. CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

God's purpose is brought to pass, not through the will or the works of men, but because God's power operates on people and events according to His will. Paul explains this to the Roman brethren (Rom. 9:9-13) using the "sons of promise" miraculously born to Sarah and Rebekah as examples as well as God's choice of Jacob before he was born:

"Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated".

This does not exclude Esau from divine blessing providing Esau is obedient to the will of God. Jacob was chosen as the channel through whom God's grace and favour could flow to all mankind (including Esau). This selection, fore-ordination, was fully in accordance with the fore-knowledge of God as to the ultimate development of the two sons. Jacob's faith took a long time to perfect but God saw its possibilities from the beginning. Esau showed no such promise.

Let us always pray that through God's grace, we may be amongst those children of promise who are called by His will to receive His blessing.

REFERENCE LIBRARY

- "The Ways of Providence" by Robert Roberts, chapters 5 and 6**
- "Elpis Israel" by John Thomas, part 2, chapter 3.**
- "Paul's Letter to the Romans" by John Carter, section 3 (d).**
- "Wrestling Jacob" by H. A. Whitaker, chapters 1 to 5.**

QUESTIONS

- 1. In what way did Esau despise his birthright?**
- 2. How did Jacob obtain the blessing from Isaac?**
- 3. How did Jacob fulfil the role of "supplanter"?**
- 4. Discuss "Jacob I have loved, but Esau have I hated" (Rom. 9:13).**
- 5. What was revealed in Jacob's dream at Bethel?**