



Isaac Genesis 26-27

Introduction

A. Review

After Abraham's death, Isaac became the patriarchal leader, and his twin sons, Jacob and Esau, began to vie for his blessing to become head of the family. Jacob cleverly maneuvered his position by getting Esau to exchange his birthright for a bowl of lamb stew. It seems that Jacob, like his father and grandfather, did not fully trust God's promises. He took things into his own hands and used his mother's deception and human ingenuity to manipulate situations.

B. Patriarchal Comparison

The Bible reveals both similarities and distinct differences between Abraham and Isaac. Abraham was a decisive, aggressive man, respected and loved for his boldness, faith and courage. Isaac on the other hand was a patient and peaceful man, unassuming and submissive. Both were men of strong faith.

OUTLINE of GENESIS 26-27

- I. Like Father, Like Son (26:1-14)**
- II. Peace With the Philistines (26:15-33)**
- III. Rebekah's Deception (27:1-29)**
- IV. Esau's Planned Revenge (27:30-46)**

I. Like Father, Like Son - Genesis 26:1-16

A. Command to Stay in the Land of Canaan - Genesis 26:1-6

The land of Canaan was again (see Genesis 12:10) struck with a famine and Isaac went to Gerar to see Abimelech, king of the Philistines. This was not the same Abimelech whom Abraham had dealt with ninety years earlier. Apparently Isaac had entertained the thought of going to Egypt to escape the famine, but the Lord appeared to him and gave instructions to stay in the land of Canaan at Gerar.

God promised He would continue to bless Isaac and his descendants and fulfill the covenant promises made to Abraham. The phrase, "*and in your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed*", specifically points to the Seed, Jesus Christ (Romans 9:6-7). God further told Isaac that all of these divine blessings would come to him because Abraham had "*obeyed My voice and kept*

My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws". This is yet another remarkable testimony to Abraham's faith.

Application

As you think back over Abraham's life and ponder his faith, consider what the Lord might say about your faith.

B. Deception and Discovery - Genesis 26:7-11

In the valley of Gerar, Isaac found himself in the same predicament his father had faced – the men of Gerar were attracted to his wife. Like his father, he feared they would kill him because of her. Like his father, Isaac lied and told them she was his sister. One day, divine intervention caused Abimelech to glance out of his window and see Isaac caressing (NASB) Rebekah. Abimelech was to some degree God-fearing and he knew that adultery involved guilt. So, he immediately confronted Isaac and reprimanded him for putting the people of Gerar in jeopardy. Further, he commanded his people not to touch either Isaac or Rebekah, and they were allowed to sojourn where they pleased,

C. Prosperity and Predicament - Genesis 26:12-14

Isaac cultivated fields, raised flocks and herds and accumulated more and more wealth in the form of sheep, goats, cattle and servants. He had inherited the bulk of Abraham's property, and with that added to his own, he became a very wealthy man. The Philistines who lived in the area became envious of Isaac's success. They were determined to make life difficult for him,

II. Peace With the Philistines - Genesis 26:15-33

A. Contention Over Water Wells - Genesis 26:15-22

Isaac's tribe outnumbered the Philistines and was actually a threat to them. Because of this and their jealous anger over Isaac's prosperity, they plugged up the water wells which Abraham had dug years earlier.

Abimelech asked Isaac to leave the area because he had become so powerful. Being a peaceful man, Isaac

chose to move farther up the valley rather than challenge the Philistines to battle. He dug new wells and found running water, but the Philistines continued to quarrel with him. He dug yet another well and the conflict over water faded away.

B. Isaac's Model of Meekness

These verses illustrate clearly that Isaac, though passive, was a noble man. He was a model of Christ's statement, "*Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth*" (Matthew 5:5). Behind his mild and tolerant manner he was broad-minded and willing to turn the other cheek (Matthew 5:39) rather than yield to man's natural bent to quarrel and fight back.

Application

The next time you have a strong disagreement or upsetting experience with another person and you want to "fight back", try to discern the real source of your reaction. Often times it is pride and self-righteousness. Most of us would do well to follow Isaac's example of handling controversial situations with meekness, humility and love. It does not come naturally, but rather from meditation, self-control and prayer for God's enabling grace and power.

C. Covenant With the Philistines - Genesis 26:23-33

Isaac moved his tribe further east to Beersheba where God again affirmed His covenant promises. He told Isaac not to fear, promising to be with him and to multiply his descendants for the sake of his father, Abraham. In response, Isaac built an altar and worshiped God. His servants also dug another well there.

In the meantime, Abimelech, realizing that God's blessings continually rested upon Isaac, became apprehensive about Isaac's growing superiority and strength. He asked Isaac for a lasting peace agreement. Being a meek and peaceable man, Isaac agreed. A covenant of peace was made with the Philistines. Interestingly, the Philistines became Israel's major enemy later in Old Testament history.

D. Esau's Carnal Character - Genesis 26:34-35

Esau's lack of concern for spiritual matters was again indicated when he married two Hittite (Canaanite) women. Esau knew that God had cursed Canaan previously (Genesis 9:25-27), and his actions revealed his carnality and disinterest in the covenant promises for his family.

III. The Great Deception - Genesis 27:1-29

A. Isaac's Plan - Genesis 27:1-4

As the years passed, Isaac's physical body and spiritual character began to deteriorate. He became blind and he depended on the natural senses of his flesh rather than faith to carry out his responsibilities. He directed Esau to shoot a deer and fix him a savory venison meal with the plan to confer the birthright and blessing on Esau. It appears that Isaac forgot or ignored Esau's selling his birthright to Jacob and his undesirable marriages to Canaanite women. For the moment, his hunger seemed more important to him than spiritual and family values.

B. Rebekah's Counter Plan - Genesis 27:5-17

Rebekah overheard Isaac's conversation with Esau and devised a scheme to trick Isaac into blessing Jacob instead of Esau. Her motive was commendable in that she wanted to be sure that Isaac's blessing went to the divinely-appointed son (Genesis 25:23). However, her method was deceptive and showed a lack of faith in God's promises. Rebekah sent Jacob to kill two young goats so she could prepare savory food which would be indistinguishable from the venison Esau would provide. Rebekah's plan was to dress Jacob in Esau's clothing and cover his arms and the smooth part of his neck with hairy, kid goats' skin. Esau was a hairy man and Isaac would probably reach out to touch the one who brought the food. Rebekah vowed to accept the curse if the plan went awry.

C. Jacob Receives the Blessing - Genesis 27:18-29

Jacob carried out Rebekah's plan, and took the meal to his father. At first, Isaac was suspicious of Jacob's voice and of the short time it had taken to hunt and kill a deer for the special meal. The whole deception prompted Jacob to lie several times, claiming that he was Esau. Jacob's most flagrant lie was the abusing of God's name by saying God brought the deer to him (27:20). His lying and deceiving by God's name was a shameful act unworthy of a believer.

After further checking on Jacob's hairy hands, Isaac still had misgivings about his identity. To ease Isaac's mind, Jacob blatantly lied. When Isaac questioned him directly, "*Are you really my son Esau,*" Jacob's answer was "*I am*". Ultimately, it was the smell of Esau's clothing that confirmed to Isaac that the lie was true.

Rebekah's deceptive plan succeeded and Isaac blessed Jacob with noble, meaningful words and a loving, heartfelt kiss.

IV. Esau's Planned Revenge - Genesis 27:30-46

A. Isaac's Reversal - Genesis 27:30-33

Soon after Jacob left Isaac's presence, Esau arrived with his savory, venison meal. Esau identified himself and Isaac, realizing what had happened, began to tremble profusely. As one commentator stated, "What a pitiful sight to see the venerable patriarch under the stress of so violent an emotion." Isaac suddenly realized how God's providence had reversed his unwise actions, and he shuddered with fear. From this point forward, Isaac was unmoved in the blessings upon Jacob. He told Esau he had blessed his brother and it could not be changed.

B. Esau's Reaction - Genesis 27:34-38

Overcome with shock and anger, Esau lost control of himself. He had forfeited both his birthright and blessing to Jacob. Although he had never aspired to higher spiritual things, he desperately wanted Isaac's solemn blessing which included the substance of the promises made to Abraham in Genesis 12:2-3. These promises included becoming a great nation, being blessed by God and being a blessing to all nations of the earth. Esau knew he had willingly sold his birthright to Jacob for food, and he had lost his blessing of family leadership by God's direction (25:23). But his self-serving flesh overruled his memory and propelled him into a tearful turmoil. He cried, begged and pleaded for another blessing from Isaac but "*he found no place for repentance, though he sought it diligently with tears*" (Hebrews 12:17).

Application

Although Esau wept and mourned his loss, he did not repent of his sin. By selling his birthright, he had despised God's promises. According to Hebrews 12:16, Esau was a "*profane person*", further described in the Amplified Bible as a "godless and sacrilegious person". Do your attitudes and actions define you as a godly person or a godless person?

C. Isaac's Response - Genesis 27:39-41

Even though he favored Esau as a son, Isaac refused to revoke his blessing on Jacob. He clearly recognized God's providential direction and sanction which overruled him. Instead of a blessing, he answered with a prophecy of Esau's future.

Esau became enraged and bitter over Isaac's blessing of Jacob. He vowed that he would kill Jacob after Isaac died.

Most commentators agree that Isaac's prophecy of

Esau's future was referring to the land of Edom (also called Mt. Seir) as Esau's dwelling place. It was a very bleak, rocky and barren country with little cultivation. There Esau would live by the sword, always subservient to his brother (Israel). See 2 Samuel 8:13-14, 1 Kings 11:15-16 and 2 Chronicles 20:22-23.

D. Jacob's Departure - Genesis 27:42-46

When Rebekah learned of Esau's murderous intention, she told Jacob he must leave immediately. She discussed it with Isaac who agreed to send Jacob to her family in Mesopotamia. Unlike Esau with his pagan wives, Jacob would hopefully find a wife that resonated with Isaac's self-interest and principles.

Summary

This has been a significant story of an entire family who tried to take things into their own hands and make things happen without faith. It shows us clearly how God's overruling providence controlled their human, sinful desires and used their ungodly acts to further His Kingdom. Each of them suffered some consequences for their lack of trust in God. Isaac was deeply troubled by his resistance to God's will that "*the older shall serve the younger*" (Genesis 25:23). Esau was sent to live away from his family. Rebekah and Jacob reaped hatred and separation for trying to achieve God's blessing by deception.

Application

In varying degrees, our old nature makes us vulnerable to the kinds of unrighteousness and failure that Isaac, Rebekah, Jacob and Esau displayed. Only through the constancy of God's mercy, grace and power are we able to overcome our tendency to "take over" from God. Will you pray that God will help you to:

- (1) "*walk worthy of the calling with which you were called*" (Ephesians 4:1);
- (2) "*walk in the Spirit and not fulfill the lust of the flesh*" (Galatians 5:16); and
- (3) "*be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might*" (Ephesians 6:10)?

QUESTIONS

All questions are based on the New King James Version of the Bible.

DAY ONE: Read Notes and References.

1. In what ways did Isaac differ from his father, Abraham?

2. a. Describe the favoritism of Isaac and Rebekah toward their twin sons.

b. How did this cause major problems within the family?

3. In what ways do you see the hand of God in all that transpired?

4. In what ways does this lesson apply to you?

DAY TWO: Read Genesis 28:1-9.

5. What instructions did Isaac give to Jacob before sending him away?

6. What was the substance of Isaac's blessing on Jacob?

7. What action did Esau take after Isaac sent Jacob away?

DAY THREE: Read Genesis 28:10-22; Deuteronomy 26:17; Hosea 12:12; John 1:51 and 1 Timothy 6:8.

8. a. In Jacob's dream, what were the angels doing?

b. Who stood above the ladder?

9. What encouraging words did Jacob hear?

10. As the son of Isaac, was Jacob a child of the flesh (natural seed) or a child of God (natural-spiritual seed)? (See Lesson 10 Introduction and Romans 9:6-8 for help). Explain.

11. a. Give the main points of the vow Jacob made.

b. ♥(Heart Question) Have you ever made a vow to God? If so, what was the outcome?

DAY FOUR: Read Genesis 29:1-13.

12. a. Who came to the well to water sheep?

b. What family was she from?

13. What did Jacob do after the sheep were watered?

14. What was Laban's response when he heard that Jacob was his sister's son?

DAY FIVE: Read Genesis 29:14-36.

15. a. What agreement did Laban and Jacob make?

b. What problem arose and how was it settled?

16. Why did the Lord allow Leah to conceive?

17. a. Give the names of Leah's first four sons and the statement she made when each was born.

b. What impresses you most about Leah's statements at the births of her sons?

c. Which son was in the Seed line (genealogy) of Jesus? See Matthew 1:2.

DAY SIX: Read Genesis 30.

18. a. How did Rachel and Leah use their maids to manipulate their circumstances?

b. How did Leah manipulate Rachel and Jacob?

19. List the names of the twelve sons of Jacob. Also use Genesis 29:32-35.

20. How did Jacob outsmart the opportunistic Laban?