

## CGYG & LIFE Bible Study – Genesis 27:1 – 28:22

### Read Genesis 27:1-46

-What was the blessing that Isaac wanted to give to Esau, and why was it important (v.4, 28-29)?

- a 'last will & testament' of sorts; considered to be legally binding
- content of the blessing indicates he was passing on the blessings given to Abraham (e.g. cf. Gen 12:1-3; 22:17-18)
  - included earth's richness, "heaven's dew; rulership over other nations and in particular over his brothers; curse on those who curse him & blessing on those who bless him

-Why did Isaac want to bless Esau (v.4, with Genesis 25:28)? What was the folly of his choice? (cf. Genesis 25:23; also, Genesis 26:34-35 with 27:46 and Proverbs 17:25; Hebrews 12:16)

- Esau was Isaac's firstborn; so in one sense had the right to inherit the blessing
- but more than that, it seems Isaac's stomach made him favor Esau (Gen 25:28) and prefer him to inherit the blessing
- this despite God's revealed will (Gen. 25:23), and the evidences of Esau as a godless/foolish man – in his selling of his birthright for a single meal (Heb. 12:16) and his choice of Hittite wives that brought grief to his parents (Gen. 26:24-25 with Prov. 17:25)
  - shows how even faithful men in old age like Isaac can succumb to the natural desires, rather than the eagerness to obey God's Word

-How did Esau, Rebekah, and Jacob respond to Isaac's directive to Esau in v.2-4? Who was "at fault" in the events described in this chapter?

- Esau went along with it, even though he had sold his birthright to Isaac
- Rebekah and Jacob conspired to get the blessing deceitfully, even invoking God's name in their deceit (27:20)
  - Jacob was Rebekah's favorite (Gen. 25:28)
  - maybe she thought she could 'help God' with His promise of Gen. 25:23; Jacob went along with it
- everyone was at fault to some extent
  - Isaac, for going against what he knew to be God's will (i.e. for Jacob to carry the blessing rather than Esau); thus caused others to stumble/sin in the process
  - Rebekah, for deceiving Isaac; she did not trust God to be able to do what He revealed; maybe thought to help God along, motivated by her favoritism for Jacob
  - Esau, for going along with it rather than deferring to Jacob
  - Jacob for deceiving Isaac; seemed more concerned about being caught than about doing wrong (v.12)

-Was Esau right to separate his birthright from his blessing (v.36; cf. Hebrews 12:16-17)?

- no; Hebrews 12:16-17 makes it clear that the 2 were linked and could not be separated
- when Esau sold his birthright, he sold his right to the blessing

-Hebrews 11:20 says, "By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau in regard to their future." How so?

- seems initially he was following his natural desires in trying to bless Esau, rather than blessing Jacob by faith
- at the same time, he believed God's promise to bless him & his descendants and knew the promises would be fulfilled
- Heb 11:20 refers to both Jacob & Esau; thus seems to refer not just to the initial blessing given in Gen. 27:28-29, but to the subsequent fallout, in which Isaac realizes what happened, confirms the blessing given to Jacob (27:33-40)
  - trembled violently when he found out what had happened because he knew he had tried to go against God's revealed will and that God had thwarted his plan (albeit through Jacob's deceit – v.33-35)
  - by faith, he did bless Jacob, indicating that Jacob was made lord and has all the richness of the earth, and there was no blessing for Esau; and by faith, he "blessed" Esau – the anti-blessing (v.37-40)
  - he would reiterate Jacob's blessing, by faith, in Gen. 28:3-4

-What consequences did Isaac, Rebekah, Esau & Jacob reap from their actions?

- Isaac - was shaken back to sober faithfulness (Gen 27:33), but had to live with the consequence of a divided family
- Rebekah - had to watch her beloved son sent away, and Scripture does not record that she ever got to see him again
- Esau - reaped bitterness; found that he could not turn back to inherit the blessing he forsook, and lost everything forever
- Jacob - put his life in jeopardy and had to be sent away, where he would meet his match in Laban. There, he would suffer from Laban's deceit (Gen. 31:38-41) and have his character shaped the hard way

- What does the outcome of this account tell us about God's sovereignty and man's responsibility? (you might also consider Proverbs 19:21; Acts 4:24-28; Galatians 6:7-9)

- people may conspire to do wrong, but God's purposes and plan prevail, even through their sinful actions
- we reap what we sow; there are repercussions for sin; therefore, should strive to live godly lives and do God's work with Godly methods
  - God's sovereignty does not negate our responsibility to do what is right → need to do God's will, God's way
  - importance of knowing and following His Word
- each character in this account did what s/he wanted to do, and reaped the consequences of his/her actions; but God's plan was fulfilled, in accordance with the prophecy of Gen. 25:23

## Read Genesis 28:1-22

-Why did Isaac command Jacob not to marry a Canaanite woman? (cf. Gen. 24:1-4; 26:34-35; 27:46) Why did Esau take another (Ishmaelite) wife? Was he right to do so?

- on one level, as a result of Rebekah's plan to get Jacob away to safety
- on a different level, for the same reason that Abraham commanded that Isaac not marry a Canaanite woman – because the Canaanites were a sinful people; also, Jacob would inherit Abraham's blessings; therefore should not expose himself or his descendants to God's judgment on the Canaanite nations (Gen. 15:16-21)
- Esau wanted to try to please his father; maybe get some blessing by getting a less undesirable wife (?); seems to have missed the point

-Why did Isaac use the name "God Almighty" (*El Shaddai*) in his blessing to Jacob? (see Gen 17:1-2)

- the last time this name of God was used, it was when God was confirming the covenant of circumcision to Abraham (Gen 17)
- Isaac here is confirming this covenant to Jacob in his blessing to him

-Why did God appear to Jacob?

- to confirm the promise he made to Abraham – confirms Isaac's blessing on Jacob
- to comfort and reassure him in a time of need and uncertainty
- assures Jacob that God is with Him, to watch over him, and that He would bring Jacob back to the land (v.15)
- assures Jacob that he is never alone, because God will never leave him (v.15)
- God had chosen Jacob and was completely faithful to him; appears to him in this time of need

-Look again at the description of 'Jacob's ladder' (28:12-13). Describe the events that are occurring. What is the significance of this ladder (cf. John 1:47-51; 1 Timothy 2:5)?

- a picture of God opening a way to heaven → an invitation to Jacob?
- points forward to Jesus Christ, the only way to God (cf. John 14:6)
- Jesus alludes to Himself as the ladder in John 1:51; He is the one mediator between God and Man, i.e. the only way to God
- side note: Jesus makes this reference in the context of seeing into a seminal moment in Nathanael's life ("I saw you while you were still under the fig tree"), resulting in awe and commitment; much as for Jacob

-How did Jacob respond to his vision, and what can we learn from his response?

- with awe and reverent fear (v.16-17)
- with remembrance – set up a pillar as a memorial (v.18-19)
- with commitment – makes a vow to God, to serve Him and give Him a tenth of everything, if God should fulfill His promise
- some think Jacob is trying to bargain with God here; the context and his actions in v.16-19 seem to suggest otherwise; that He is appropriating God's promises and committing himself to God
- we should likewise respond to what God has done for us in Christ with awe & reverent fear, with remembrance, and with commitment

-What does the account of Jacob's dream teach us about God, and how do these lessons apply to us today? (you might also consider Romans 8:28-38; Hebrews 13:5-6)

- Some thoughts...
- God's care and watchful provision for those whom He has chosen
- came to Jacob in a time of crisis/need and reassured him
- God's control over all things – He would watch over Jacob and promised that He would give him the land and descendants; would also bring him back to the land
- God's sovereignty in election; chose Jacob in spite of what Jacob had done
- God's faithfulness – confirms to Jacob the covenant He made with Abraham and Isaac; promised never to leave Jacob until He had fulfilled all the He had promised
- God is the One who reaches down from heaven to establish relationships with His created beings
- these lessons are meant for our comfort; God is still in control; He still cares for us, and nothing can separate us from His love
- only one way to heaven, i.e. through Jesus Christ

## Aliens and strangers in the world

We see in today's passage an example the mystery of God's sovereignty, as it intersects with Man's responsibility. Though the general pattern of his life was one of faith, Isaac was determined to bless Esau over Jacob – contrary to God's revealed will – and planned to do so in secret. Esau, though he had sold his birthright, went along with the plot, hoping to regain the blessing he had so foolishly and recklessly forfeited for a bowl of stew. Having eavesdropped on their conversation, Rebekah conspired with Jacob to obtain Isaac's blessing deceitfully. Jacob hesitated – not because what Rebekah proposed to do was wrong, but because he feared getting caught – but ultimately carried through with the scheme, even invoking the Lord's name in his deception. In the end, they did what God had determined beforehand would happen, yet each person did exactly as he pleased – and reaped the consequences of his actions. Though he was shocked back to sober faithfulness, Isaac had to live with the consequences of a fractured and divided family. Esau reaped bitterness and envy, finding no way back to regain the blessing he had forever forsaken. Jacob placed his own life at risk and would be subjected to the Lord's discipline, being forced to flee to his uncle Laban, who would give him a taste of his own medicine for the next 20 years. For her part, Rebekah would lose her favored son, and Scripture does not record that she was ever able to see him again.

This episode serves as a reminder that though God is sovereign over all things and His purposes will prevail, we are still responsible to walk in obedience to Him and to do things in accordance with His ways, lest we invite His discipline upon us. "For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do." (Ephesians 2:10)