

BOB HALLMAN - THE EPIC LIFE

“The Offspring Of Abraham”

Genesis 25:1-34

2003

Introduction

James 4:13-14 “What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes.”

Illustration: Grandma in the grave

In light of life’s brevity, one of the most profound and beneficial questions we can ask is:

“How would you like to be remembered at your funeral and what steps would you need to take for that to happen?”

“What kind of memories are you leaving your spouse, your children, and your friends?”

“What kind of legacy are you creating?”

I The Account Of Abraham’s Final Years

A. He took another wife named Keturah [Verse 1-4]

Abraham’s wife, Sarah, had died some three years earlier.

1. She bore him 6 sons

Gen 17:3-6 “As for me, this is my covenant with you: You will be the father of many nations. No longer will you be called Abram; your name will be Abraham, for I have made you a father of many nations. I will make you very fruitful; I will make nations of you, and kings will come from you.”

B. He took care of his children [Verse 5-6]

1. He left everything to Isaac

Gen 24:36 “My master's wife Sarah has borne him a son in her old age, and he has given him everything he owns.”

Application: Isaac is a type or foreshadowing of Jesus Christ:

John 3:35 “The Father loves the Son and has placed everything in his hands.”

2. He distributed gifts to his other sons

Application: There is a great deal of wisdom in distributing your estate gradually before your death – 1) For tax purposes as well as for 2) Family peace.

3. He sent the other sons away from Isaac

This expression, "He sent them to the land of the east" is significant. When Abraham first came into the land, he pitched his tent between Ai and Bethel, with Ai on the east and Bethel on the west. *Ai* means "ruin"; *Bethel* means "the house, or place,

of God." Isaac was given the inheritance in the west, in the place of God, while his other sons were sent out into the east countries to the place of ruin.

Gen 21:9-10 "... and she said to Abraham, "Get rid of that slave woman and her son, for that slave woman's son will never share in the inheritance with my son Isaac."

Application: This is a reminder to us that there are two places we can live from a spiritual perspective: 1) A life separated from God – the place of ruin. Or 2) A life in relationship with God – a life of blessing!

C. He died at the age of 175 [Verse 7-11]

Abraham was one of the most important men of the Bible. He is mentioned 70 times in the New Testament alone (only Moses is mentioned more times [80 times]). And he was called "the friend of God" (James 2:23b), one of the few men in the Bible who enjoyed that privilege.

However, according to Jesus' words in the Jn 15:14, anyone who obeys Gods' Word is called God's friend.

The account says that he "was gathered to his people." What does that mean? It means that he was gathered to those who had preceded him in death and had exercised faith in God. Up until the time of Christ's resurrection they were in a place called "Abraham's bosom."

Heb 11:13-16 "All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance. And they admitted that they were aliens and strangers on earth. People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own. If they had been thinking of the country they had left, they would have had opportunity to return. Instead, they were longing for a better country-a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them."

1. He was buried by his sons in the cave of Machpelah

By Isaac and Ishmael. The last mention of these two brothers being together was on the day that Ishmael and Hagar were sent away some 72 years earlier. But for the occasion of his father's burial, Ishmael returned to bury his father in cooperation with Isaac.

2. God then blessed Isaac his son

II The Account Of Ishmael

Towledah = "Generations or family history"

A. He was the son of Hagar [Verse 12]

B. He had **12** sons [Verse 13-16]

Once again God kept His promise to Abraham.

Gen 17:20 “And as for Ishmael, I have heard you: I will surely bless him; I will make him fruitful and will greatly increase his numbers. He will be the father of twelve rulers, and I will make him into a great nation.”

C. He died at the age of 137 [Verse 17]

Like his father, Abraham, Ishmael was also gathered to his people indicating that Ishmael was a believer in God and shared in the spiritual blessings of all who die in the faith.

D. His descendants settled in Havilah to Shur [Verse 18]

Havilah = The desert area of northern Arabia

Shur = The wilderness areas east of the border of Egypt.

1. They lived in **hostility** toward their brothers

Again we see another promise fulfilled. A promise that God made to Hagar 137 years earlier:

Gen 16:12 “He will be a wild donkey of a man; his hand will be against everyone and everyone's hand against him, and he will live in hostility toward all his brothers.”

III The Account Of Isaac

A. He was married to Rebekah [Verse 19-20]

Isaac married Rebekah when he was 40, but it was 20 years later before she bore him children.

B. He was a man who **trusted** God [Verse 21-22a]

1. He **prayed** for his barren wife and God **answered**

God desires us to pray and not just assume His blessing. As James 4:2 says, “You do not have because you do not ask God.”

Illustration: Cape May - Our prayer for a child – 1992

Ps 113:5-9 “Who is like the LORD our God, the One who sits enthroned on high, who stoops down to look on the heavens and the earth? He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from the ash heap; he seats them with princes, with the princes of their people. He settles the barren woman in her home as a happy mother of children. Praise the LORD.”

2. He was blessed with two sons

C. Rebekah inquired as to why they **jostled** within her [Verse 22b]

Jostled = “Intense activity or competition”

The struggle going on in Rebekah's womb was more than just normal fetal movement.

Jewish legends say Jacob and Esau tried to kill each other in the womb. Also, every time Rebekah went near an idol's altar, Esau would get excited in the womb, and when she would go near a place where the Lord was worshipped, Jacob would get excited.

Rebekah was so puzzled by this internal struggle that she prayed to God for an answer.

Application: Do you need wisdom for some area of your life? God is just waiting ...

James 1:4-5 "If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him."

Lost wallet

1. Two **nations** are in your womb [Verse 23a]
 - a. Two people will be separated
2. One will be **stronger** than the other [Verse 23b]
 - a. The older will serve the younger

In Romans 9 the Apostle Paul referred to Esau and Jacob as an illustration of divine election:

Rom 9:10-16 "Not only that, but Rebekah's children had one and the same father, our father Isaac. Yet, before the twins were born or had done anything good or bad-in order that God's purpose in election might stand: not by works but by him who calls-she was told, "The older will serve the younger." What then shall we say? Is God unjust? Not at all! For he says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion." It does not, therefore, depend on man's desire or effort, but on God's mercy."

As Paul points out, God's choice was not based on the performance of Jacob or Esau. The choice was made when they were *not yet being born, nor having done any good or evil*. God announced these intentions to Rebekah before the children were born (*The older shall serve the younger*), and repeated His verdict long after Jacob and Esau had both passed from the earth (*Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated*, Malachi 1:2-3).

"A woman once said to the great Charles Spurgeon, 'I cannot understand why God should say that He hated Esau.' 'That,' Spurgeon replied, 'is not my difficulty, madam. My trouble is to understand how God could love Jacob.'" (Guzik, D. "Study Guide for Romans 9". blueletterbible.org)

Transition: Hos 12:3 "In the womb he grasped his brother's heel."

Jacob's name means, "Heal-catcher". But it also meant "trickster," "con-man," "scoundrel," or "rascal." It definitely wasn't a compliment!

Evidently, the boys were struggling even up to the point of birth! Jacob was still hanging on this his hand to the heel of his brother, Esau, trying to pull him back.

IV The Account Of Esau And Jacob

A. A description of the sons [Verse 24]

1. Esau was: [Verse 25, 27-28]

a. Red and hairy

In fact the name Esau means “Hairy”

Just how fuzzy was he? Well, keep in mind that Jacob would later pretend to be Esau by wearing goatskins on his hands and neck! This was one hairy guy!

Illustration: Every once in a while I see tourists like this on the beaches of Kauai. It is really quite amazing to witness!

b. A skilled hunter

Esau was what the world might label as a “man’s man.” He was an outdoors kind of guy who loved to do the things a father could take pride in. He was a skillful hunter, and he knew how to handle himself in the outdoors. In our culture Esau would have been a famous surfer, or an all-star football player.

But it’s worth noting that the only other hunter mentioned in the Bible is Nimrod who was a rebel against God. Unfortunately, Esau appears to have followed in Nimrod’s footsteps because he was unconcerned with the things of God.

Hebrews 12 describes him in rather unflattering terms:

- He was sexually immoral – Heb 12:16
- He was godless – Heb 12:16

c. Loved by his father, Isaac

Despite Esau's ungodly character, Isaac loved Esau more than Jacob. The only rational we are given here in the text is because Isaac had a taste for wild game.

And while Isaac knew God’s desire to pass on the physical and spiritual blessing of the inheritance to Jacob, Isaac failed to obey God’s will and to transfer the birthright on to Jacob.

2. Jacob was: [Verse 26-28]

a. A quiet man

It is definitely not a word used to describe someone who is weak or effeminate.

Quiet = “Mature or complete” -- It is the same word used of Job

Job 1:8 “Then the LORD said to Satan, “Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is *blameless* and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil.”

b. A man who stayed among the tents

Caring for the flocks and herds of his father.

c. Loved by his mother, Rebekah

Jacob knew of the prophecies concerning his future and inheritance. I'm sure his brother knew as well. And undoubtedly, this knowledge was a source of conflict between these two brothers.

Each parent seems to have identified too much with a particular son, thus creating divisions, which would be devastating. This favoritism also brought about disharmony between Isaac and his wife. Later Rebekah was to conspire with Jacob to deceive her husband (chapter 27).

B. A despising of the birthright [Verse 29-34]

1. Esau was **hungry**

It's fascinating to consider the parallels between this account of Esau and the account of Jesus Christ in Matt 4 when Jesus was tempted in the wilderness for 40 days.

Matt 4:1-4 "Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil. 2 After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. 3 The tempter came to him and said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread." 4 Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"

Fortunately for us, where Esau failed, Jesus succeeded!

2. Jacob purchased Esau's birthright

What was the **birthright**, and why did Jacob want it?

Deuteronomy 21:17 and 1 Chronicles 5:1-2 tell us the *birthright* involved both a material and a spiritual blessing. The son of the birthright received a double portion of the inheritance, but he also became the head of the family and the spiritual leader upon the passing of the father. And, in the case of this family, the birthright determined who would inherit the covenant God made with Abraham, the covenant of a land, a nation, and the Messiah.

Rather than showing his brother any mercy or grace, Jacob saw this as an opportunity to gain the advantage. Since Isaac, his father, had failed to pass on the birthright to Jacob as God has indicated, Jacob decided to take things into his own hands. Without a hint of shame Jacob bartered, "... First sell me your birthright."

Martin Luther: "This was not a valid transaction, because Jacob was buying what was already his, and Esau was selling something that didn't belong to him."

Application: How many times I have been tempted to take things into my own hands. To make sure that I get my rights. To make sure that I am not taken advantage of. But God's ways are very different:

Prov 3:5-6 "Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight."

3. Esau **forfeited** his birthright

a. He failed to **trust** the Lord

Is 40:29-31 "He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak. Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; but those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint."

Ps 34:10 "The lions may grow weak and hungry, but those who seek the LORD lack no good thing."

b. He sold his birthright

Here we find Esau with an exaggerated view of his physical condition and at the same time demonstrating a minimal appreciation for the value of his birthright. He was about to exchange his destiny for a dinner!

Why did Esau sell out? "History shows that men prefer illusions to realities, choose time rather than eternity, and the pleasures of sin for a season rather than the joys of God forever. Men will read trash rather than the Word of God, and adhere to a system of priorities that leaves God out of their lives. Multitudes of men spend more time shaving than on their souls; and multitudes of women give more minutes to their makeup than to the life of the eternal spirit. Men still sell their birthright for a mess of pottage." (Barnhouse)

c. He **despised** his birthright

I find it interesting that most people consider Jacob to be a weak, effeminate, money-grabbing deceiver. But the scripture does not offer one word of condemnation or criticism of Jacob. Instead, it condemns Esau because:

- He was sexually immoral – Heb 12:16
- He was godless – Heb 12:16
- He despised his birthright – Gen 25:34

Application:

Ephesians 1:3-14 tells us of our birthright in Jesus Christ: We have every spiritual blessing in Christ, the blessing of being chosen in Jesus, adoption into God's family, total acceptance by God in Jesus, redemption from our slavery to sin, true and total forgiveness, the riches of God's grace, the

revelation and knowledge of the mystery of God's will, an eternal inheritance, and the guarantee of the indwelling Holy Spirit right now.

I know many believers who are like Esau. People who have sold their inheritance for Christ for what amounts to a bowl of red stew.

Satan is constantly tempting us to forfeit the eternal riches of our spiritual inheritance in Christ for the pleasure of immediate gratification:

1. An evening of watching ungodly programming on the TV
2. An illicit affair
3. Financial compromise to get ahead.

Conclusion

The message of the Bible is that all of us deserve the eternal wrath of God for our sins (Romans 3:10-18,23; 6:23). The message of the gospel is that God has provided a solution for the sins of man. That solution is the sacrifice of Jesus Christ upon the cross of Calvary where He bore the punishment that we deserve. He offers us the righteousness we lack (Romans 3:21-26; II Corinthians 5:21). It is true that those who are saved are those whom God has chosen from eternity past (Acts 13:48; 16:14; Ephesians 1:11, etc.). It is also true that all who are saved are those who have personally believed in Jesus Christ as their Substitute and their Savior. Every person who calls upon Him for salvation will be saved.

John 1:12-13 "Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God -- children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God."

Rom 10:13 "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

If you want to be assured of eternal life you must:

1. Repent of your sins

Repent = Metaneo = "To think differently and to change course."

Acts 3:19 "Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord ..."

2. Reconcile your relationship to God through Jesus

Reconcile = Apokatalasso = "To put right a broken relationship"

1 Peter 3:18 "For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God.

3. Realign your loyalty & allegiance to Christ.

2 Cor 5:15 "And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again."

4. Make a public profession of your faith by being baptized in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

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