

BOB HALLMAN - THE EPIC LIFE

“Esau’s Family Tree”

Genesis 36:1-43

2003

Introduction

There is a growing interest among many people to trace their family history:

1. To have a better sense of their own identity.
2. To discover how they fit into the larger picture of human history.

Unfortunately, not everything we discover in genealogies is positive:

Illustration:

The Smith's were proud of their family tradition. Their ancestors had come to America on the Mayflower. Their line had included Senators, Pastors, and Wall Street wizards.

Now they decided to compile a family history, a legacy for the children.

They hired a fine author. Only one problem arose: how to handle that great-uncle who was executed in the electric chair. But the author said not to worry, he could handle that section of history tactfully.

When the book appeared, the family turned to the section on Uncle George. There, they read "George Smith occupied a chair of applied electronics at an important government institution, was attached to his position by the strongest of ties. His death came as a real shock."

For many people, researching their family genealogy is a hobby. For others it is an obsession! In fact some of the most frequented sites on Internet today are sites that help people research their family history. [9,210,000 sites on Google]

Funny story:

A young boy was assigned a paper on childbirth and asked his parents "how was I born?" "Well honey..." said the slightly uncomfortable mother, "the stork brought you to us."

"Oh," said the boy. "Well, how did you and daddy get born?" he asked. "Well, the stork brought us too."

"Then, how were grandpa and grandma born?" he persisted. "Well son, the stork brought them too!" said the mother, by now feeling a bit guilty and uncomfortable.

Several days later, the boy handed in his paper to the teacher who read with confusion the opening sentence: "This report has been very difficult to write due to the fact that there hasn't been a natural

childbirth in my family for three generations."

Genealogies can be interesting, enlightening and very informative. But they can also be dull, lifeless and, as is the case today, particularly challenging to teach!

Frankly, Chapter 36 of Genesis is one of those texts that most Christians flip past and most pastors prefer to skip.

But the fact remains that God considered the genealogy of Esau important enough to include in the Canon of Scripture.

The question is, "Why?"

1. To record the fulfillment of God's promises to Esau

Despite the fact that Esau forfeited his birthright and blessing, God ensured that he would have his own identity, nation and family history.

Gen 17:5-7 "I will make you very fruitful; I will make nations of you, and kings will come from you."

2. To protect the descendents of Esau

The first readers of this chapter were the Israelites who were about to cross over the Jordan River to possess the land of Canaan and to annihilate the Canaanites (Dt 1:8; 20:16-18). There were, however, some people who were not to be attacked or annihilated. Among those whom God protected were a people called the Edomites, the descendants of Esau.

Deut 2:2-5 "Then the LORD said to me, ... Give the people these orders: 'You are about to pass through the territory of your brothers the descendants of Esau, who live in Seir. They will be afraid of you, but be very careful. Do not provoke them to war, for I will not give you any of their land, not even enough to put your foot on. I have given Esau the hill country of Seir as his own.'

And so, to prevent this command from being violated, it was essential for those Israelites of Moses' day to know who the Edomites were and to have a carefully documented record of the generations of Esau. That record is the substance of chapter 36.

3. Finally, it is a wonderful reminder that every person counts in God's eyes. Someone else's genealogy may not be of any interest to you, but to the people and families it represents, it is precious.

Each of these names represent the life of a man or woman – individuals made in the image of God who had hopes, dreams and aspirations just like you and me.

I The Account of Esau

AKA = Edom = "Red"

A reference and reminder of Esau's foolish decision to trade the birthright and blessing of his father Isaac for a red pot of stew - Gen 25:30.

A. The **wives** of Esau [Verses 1-3]

1. Canaanite wives
2. Daughter of Ishmael

B. The **sons** of Esau [Verses 4-5]

1. Esau's sons through the Canaanite wives
2. Esau's sons through the lineage of Ishmael

C. The **relocation** of Esau [Verses 6-8]

Despite the fact that Esau had forfeited his birthright and blessing, God blessed Esau with an abundance of people, livestock and material goods.

Matt 5:45 "... [God] causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous."

Acts 14:17 "Yet [God] has not left himself without testimony: He has shown kindness by giving you rain from heaven and crops in their seasons; he provides you with plenty of food and fills your hearts with joy."

1. He moved away from Jacob

Esau had become a very gracious man. At one time he had threatened to kill his brother for his deception, but now when their mutual prosperity necessitated it, he graciously moved out of his brother's way.

Illustration:

Christ was the embodiment of this kind of grace and became the ultimate example to us of a man who yielded and surrendered His rights.

Phil 2:3-4 "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus ..."

2. He moved to the hill country of Seir

Esau had begun to settle among his wives' relations, in Seir, before Jacob came from Padan-aram, but after his father's death, he now he makes the move permanent.

There are two reasons for this:

1. There wasn't sufficient water and pasture for both Esau's and Jacob's flocks and herds
2. Esau had finally come to accept that the promised land of Canaan that God had covenanted to Abraham, was to be passed on to Jacob.

II The Account Of The Edomites

Edom and the Edomites are mentioned over 130 times in the Bible. They were an important group of "neighbors" to Israel. When the Israelites came through the wilderness to the Promised Land in the time of Moses, the Edomites refused them passage through their land (Num 20:21). This was a source of great discouragement for the nation (Num 21:4). Even so, God commanded special treatment for the Edomites among Israel: You shall not abhor an Edomite, for he is your brother (Dt 23:7). Several of the prophets spoke about and against Edom, including Jeremiah (Jer 49:17-18) and Ezekiel (Ezek 25:12-14). From the time Islam conquered the Middle East, the region has been virtually unoccupied in fulfillment of God's predictions through the prophet Obadiah.

A. The **grandchildren** of Esau [Verse 9-19]

1. Esau's descendants through the Canaanite wives - 10-13
 - a. Esau's two sons - 10
 - b. The sons of Eliphaz - 11,12
 1. Sons of Eliphaz through his wife - 11
 2. Sons of Eliphaz through his concubine - 12

Notable among this list is *Amalek* mentioned in verse 12. From him would come the Amalekites, who were notable enemies of Israel (Ex 17:8-16; Dt 25:17-19; 1 Sam 15:1-8).

c. The sons of Reuel - 13

2. Esau's descendants through Ishmael - 14
 - a. Chiefs through Eliphaz - 15,16

Chiefs = Probably military commanders
Gen 27:40 "You will live by the sword and you will serve your brother."
 - b. Chiefs through Reuel - 17
 - c. Chiefs through Ishmael's lineage - 18
 - d. Esau is Edom - 19

B. The sons of Seir [Verse 20-30]

The people of Seir were the inhabitants of this mountainous region prior to Esau's arrival and were the people with whom Esau and his descendents intermarried.

C. The **kings** of Edom [Verse 31-39]

1. The kings of Edom before Israel had a king

It's worth noting that Esau saw chiefs, kings and kingdoms come from him long before Jacob did. In fact, while Esau's sons and grandsons would become rulers, Jacob's sons remained lowly shepherds for generations - Gen 47:3.

So, in short term, the Edomites became chiefs and rulers in this world.

But in the long-term, Jacob's descendants would become kings and priest of the most high God.

As James Montgomery Boice has said: "If God blesses so abundantly those who are not chosen, what is the magnitude of His blessings for those who *are* chosen? If ungodly people experience such outpourings of merely common grace, how great must the special grace of the regenerate be!"

Application:

Don't put too much stock in this world's titles or positions.
For believers, God has already given us a high position:

1 Peter 2:9-10 "But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy."

But the time will come soon enough when we will rule with Him:

2 Tim 2:11-12 "Here is a trustworthy saying: If we died with him, we will also live with him; if we endure, we will also reign with him."

- D. The **chiefs** descended from Esau [Verse 40-43]
1. This is Esau the father of the Edomites

III The Lessons From Esau's Family Tree

- A. Your **life** matters to God

Matt 10:29-31 "Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from the will of your Father. And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows."

- B. The high price of spiritual **compromise**

Esau had led a sexual immoral and godless lifestyle - Heb 12:16-17
He had forfeited his birthright and lost his blessing – Gen 25:29-34

He had to spend the rest of his life wondering, "What if ...?"

- C. God's ultimate blessing requires God's plan, God's methods and God's **timing**.

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."

Ecc 3:11 "He has made everything beautiful in its time."

- D. God wants us to **seek** Him

Acts 17:25-27 “From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live. God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us.”

E. God is **faithful** to His promises

Num 23:19 “God is not a man, that he should lie, nor a son of man, that he should change his mind. Does he speak and then not act? Does he promise and not fulfill?”

2 Cor 1:19 “For no matter how many promises God has made, they are "Yes" in Christ.”

F. You are **writing** history

Every day you live, the choices you make, the things you say, and the actions you take are becoming a part of history.

Eph 5:15 “Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity ...”

a. You are making daily, eternal deposits into the bank account of your destiny

Rom 2:5-8 “God "will give to each person according to what he has done."

To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor and immortality, he will give eternal life. But for those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger.”

Rev 22:12 “Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done.”

b. You are influencing the eternal destiny of others (one way or the other)

How you conduct yourself in your marriage, with your children, in your work, and in the community is incredibly important! You are leaving a legacy for those who will follow in your steps.

Prov 20:7 “The righteous man leads a blameless life; blessed are his children after him.”

“All Standing In a Row”

If you could see your ancestors all standing in a row,

Would you be proud of them, or don't you really know?

Some strange discoveries are made in climbing family trees,

And some of them, you know, do not particularly please.

If you could see your ancestors all standing in a row,

There might be some of them, perhaps, you wouldn't care to know.

But here's another question, which requires a different view --

If you could meet your ancestors, would they be proud of you?

(Author Unknown)

F. Your **name** can be recorded in the Lamb's Book of Life

God has a book in heaven filled with millions, possibly billions, of obscure names from every people, nation, tongue and race; the names of men and women over the millennia who have put their trust in the Messiah of God, Jesus Christ, for the forgiveness of their sins.

Rev 20:15 "If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire."

Rev 21:27 "Nothing impure will ever enter [the temple of God in heaven], nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life."

Conclusion

Is your name written in the Lamb's Book of Life?

It can be if you are willing to:

1. Acknowledge and repent of your sin against God
 - Rom 3:23 "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."
 - 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. Believe that Jesus Christ is Lord, that He came to earth to take your place on the cross and rose on the third day that you might be forgiven of your sins and reconciled to God.
 - Rom 10:9 "That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved."
 - 1 Peter 3:18 "For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God."
3. Receive the gift of forgiveness and salvation by faith alone.
 - John 1:12 "Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God."

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