

On the Beginning

28. Transition

NOTE ESPECIALLY GENESIS 25

It can be asserted that the pivotal chapter of the fifty that make up the Book of Genesis is Chapter 25. All three of the great patriarchs of Israel (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob) play roles in Genesis 25. Both sons of Abraham (Ishmael and Isaac) and both sons of Isaac (Esau and Jacob) are in this one chapter. A giant step toward the formation of the nation Israel (Esau's sale of his birthright to Jacob) is taken at the end of the chapter. Also, several important truths are introduced to us.

1. The Father of **Many Nations**.

At the beginning of Genesis 25 (vs. 1-4), Abraham marries again. This time he marries a woman named Keturah ("incense"). By Keturah, Abraham had six sons! Apparently the miracle that revived his "*dead*" body in regard to reproduction was still effective (Remember Romans 4: 18-19). We remember that Abraham's name means "father of many nations" (Genesis 17:5), and now we see how this name given by God will be fulfilled. By Ishmael, he is the father of the Arab people. By Isaac, he is the father of the Israelites and the Edomites (through Jacob and Esau-v.30). Through the sons of Keturah, Abraham is the father of other nations, including the Midianites.

2. The **Blessing** Is Passed On.

Again (in verses 5 through 11) we see the favor God showed to Isaac as the chosen seed of his father. Isaac received the covenant and promises the LORD gave to Abraham and his seed. (See again Genesis 12:1-3, 12:7, 13:15, 17:6-8, and 22:15-18. Also look up Genesis 26:3-5.) When Abraham died, Isaac took up the torch of God's redemption plan. Involved in it was the fact that his family line (and not Ishmael's) would produce the promised Saviour!

3. The **Story** of Redemption.

As we have already noticed in the Book of Genesis, the Old Testament historical narrative follows the line of Christ. Other branches of His family tree are summed up and then neglected, as Ishmael's line is in verses 12-18. See this happen again in Genesis 36 in regard to the line of Esau. The Old Testament does not just tell stories. It focuses on the history of God's plan of redemption!

4. The Question, **"Why?"**

The story of redemption continues with the story of Jacob's birth. Jacob's name was later changed to Israel, and he was the father of God's chosen nation! As we see in Genesis 25:19-26, his birth had a lot to do with Isaac's and Rebekah's prayers. First, Isaac prayed for his wife to conceive "*because she was barren.*" God answered his prayers by having her conceive twins. When there was trouble in the pregnancy, God heard Rebekah's

question, “*Why?*” (v. 22). It’s not wrong to ask God why. Rebekah’s prayer was answered by God giving her special insight into His plan for her twin boys (v. 23). When the question, “*Why?*” is really an expression of rebellion and unbelief it is not appropriate for the Christian. When, however, it is an honest question from a trusting heart seeking to know God’s will in order to follow it, the question can be *very* appropriate for the Christian! However, we do not always get as clear an answer in this life as Rebekah did. Job never really understood why things happened to him until he went to Heaven! But it isn’t really wrong to ask, “*Why?*” Just keep on trusting God even if you don’t find out why he has done what He has done.

5. The **Profanity** of Esau.

We are tempted to blame Jacob for the sale of Esau’s birthright, but God blames Esau! See how Genesis 25 ends:

“*. . . thus Esau despised his birthright.*” (verse 34)

The New Testament also blames Esau for the sale of his birthright. Using the Book of Genesis to teach Christians to beware of sinful elements in their churches, Hebrews 12 says,

“Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord: Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled; Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright.”
(verses 14-16)

The word translated “*profane*” in this passage refers to somebody who would desecrate something holy. Back in Genesis 25, God says that Esau “*despised his birthright,*” and the Hebrew word used for “*despised*” means to disesteem, disdain, or scorn. In other words, Esau belittled the value of his birthright, and scorned it. His esteeming the pottage higher than the birthright classified him in God’s judgment as “*profane.*”

We know how valuable the birthright was in the ancient family unit, and especially in the family of Abraham and Isaac. It was normally the privilege of the firstborn son and it meant special honor and favor in the family and in the inheritance passed down upon the father’s death. In Abraham’s family, the birthright was connected with the “*blessing*” God bestowed on the chosen sons (See Genesis 22, and note what Hebrews 12: 16-17 says). The birthright and the Abrahamic blessing were the *most valuable* things Isaac would give to one of his sons. But Esau the first-born lost them both, not because he was cheated, but because he didn’t care about his birthright! Food for right now was more important to him than the lasting importance of his birthright.

Let us all be warned against esteeming the earthly more than the heavenly, the carnal more than the spiritual, or the temporal more than the eternal. Dr. Bob Jones, Sr., used to say, “Don’t sacrifice the permanent on the altar of the immediate.” Jacob was crafty and ambitious, not at all what he should have been, but at least he valued what was really valuable. Esau, on the other hand, was profane and worse than Jacob because his values were way off!

