

GENESIS 28:1-9 (MAY GOD ALMIGHTY BLESS YOU)

Introduction: Today is the last part of Genesis where Isaac takes a leading role. Once we're through verse 9, it will be Jacob who takes center stage in the biblical narrative. Abraham mostly pictured God the Father throughout his time, although he did take on other roles.

Isaac predominantly was a picture of God the Son. These two great men of faith did their time and they now stand in the background. Rebekah too is done. Last week, her final words were spoken and now she'll only be mentioned in relation to something else.

As always, the Bible directs our attention toward specific key figures only for the purposes of showing us God's plan of redemption and conveying His thoughts and heart to us. However, when they no longer play any pertinent role, they are given the quiet respect of the privacy of life we all desire.

These people lived full lives and many stories could be told of the things they did, but God has just chosen specific details for His purposes alone. Let's pay attention to every word which God has given because those words truly encompass the heart and mind of God for His beloved children.

Text Verse: Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest *your* hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; ¹⁴ as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, *as* in your ignorance; ¹⁵ but as He who called you *is* holy, you also be holy in all *your* conduct, 1 Peter 1:13-15

Peter tells us to be "as obedient children" and to live our lives in holiness, rejecting that which is profane. Today we'll see how obedience ultimately has to be aligned with God's plan or it ends in futility. One son's obedience follows what God intended while the other son, attempting to be obedient, actually misses the mark.

If we don't know God's intent for us, then we're bound to make the same types of error and so I will admonish you, as I do so often – read your Bible,

study your Bible, and know your Bible and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. To Find a Wife

Although many Genesis stories can be looked at without much reference to surrounding events, it wouldn't make nearly as much sense to start chapter 28 without remembering what happened just prior to the today's verses. After Jacob deceptively obtained the blessing from Isaac, we came to these verses last week –

⁴¹ So Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing with which his father blessed him, and Esau said in his heart, “The days of mourning for my father are at hand; then I will kill my brother Jacob.” ⁴² And the words of Esau her older son were told to Rebekah. So she sent and called Jacob her younger son, and said to him, “Surely your brother Esau comforts himself concerning you *by intending* to kill you. ⁴³ Now therefore, my son, obey my voice: arise, flee to my brother Laban in Haran. ⁴⁴ And stay with him a few days, until your brother's fury turns away, ⁴⁵ until your brother's anger turns away from you, and he forgets what you have done to him; then I will send and bring you from there. Why should I be bereaved also of you both in one day?” ⁴⁶ And Rebekah said to Isaac, “I am weary of my life because of the daughters of Heth; if Jacob takes a wife of the daughters of Heth, like these *who are* the daughters of the land, what good will my life be to me?”

This sets up the thoughts of what is ahead of us.

¹ Then Isaac called Jacob and blessed him, and charged him, and said to him: “You shall not take a wife from the daughters of Canaan.

Based on what Rebekah said before and probably after thinking about it a bit, our first verse today says that Isaac called Jacob and blessed him and charged him. John Wesley had a good thought concerning this –

“Those that have the blessing must keep the charge annexed to it, and not think to separate what God has joined.”

In other words, and this is an immediate life application for all of us, we cannot expect the blessings of the Bible without adhering to the things we have been charged to do. I've been on Jewish blogs that faithfully quote these verses from Jeremiah 31 –

Thus says the LORD, Who gives the sun for a light by day, The ordinances of the moon and the stars for a light by night, Who disturbs the sea, And its waves roar (The LORD of hosts *is* His name): ³⁶ “If those ordinances depart From before Me, says the LORD, *Then* the seed of Israel shall also cease From being a nation before Me forever.”

The idea they get from this is that God loves them no matter what they do and that they are special and set apart by Him. It's true, they are His special people and they are set apart by Him, but that's only half of the equation. They fail to take into account about 4 jillion verses of judgment on Israel for disobedience.

We can sum up the blessings and curses of Israel by reading Deuteronomy 28. The Lord gives Israel the charge - obedience. He then tells the blessings they can expect for obedience and then he tells the curses they can expect for disobedience. I've been to the holocaust memorial in Israel with my mother.

It's a very moving place to visit and it stresses the tragedy that Israel has suffered in history, but it fails to note any personal responsibility. I told my mom when we left, that the only thing I thought was missing was a copy of Deuteronomy 28 placed on the wall in every language where they have been dispersed.

In the end, their dispersion and sufferings would not have happened if they were obedient to the Lord. We get the same thing in churches all the time - I'm not just picking on the Jews here.

People claim blessings and prosperity, but they fail to walk in the counsel of the Lord and they don't recognize the sin in their life for what it is. When tragedy comes, they project outward, not inward when in fact whether in

Israel, the church, or our nation - we need to look at our own choices which result in judgment.

Here at the beginning of the chapter, Isaac both blesses and charges his son. Let each of us remember the charge when looking for the blessing. In the case of Jacob, the charge is, "You shall not take a wife from the daughters of Canaan." We've been given a similar charge in the New Testament –

"Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?" 2 Corinthians 6:14

The idea behind Paul's words is that we're to keep our alliances faithful to our faith. We are to marry only believers and we're to engage in business partnerships with Christians. It's hard enough to make a marriage work with a Christian, but when our goals and priorities don't sync, how much more difficult will it be?

So here we are with Jacob who is now 77 years old. Because of the birthright and now the blessing which he has received, Isaac sees that it is time for him to marry and start a family which will keep the Messianic line going.

Pondering Rebekah's words about the daughters of Heth, he realizes that it is best for Jacob to go to Padan Aram where Rebekah was from in order to find a wife from there. Esau's wives, because they had different values were a source of grief to the family. Isaac wants Jacob to not find himself in the same mess.

² Arise, go to Padan Aram, to the house of Bethuel your mother's father; and take yourself a wife from there of the daughters of Laban your mother's brother.

Isaac is taking the same care of Jacob that Abraham did for him so many years earlier. However, unlike Isaac, who stayed in the land of Canaan while

a wife was chosen for him by Abraham's servant, Jacob is going off to Mesopotamia.

The reason for the difference is that God wants to show us different things about His work for us. The story of Abraham's servant finding a bride for Isaac pointed to the Holy Spirit getting a bride for Jesus while He waits in heaven, pictured by the land of Canaan, the Promised Land.

Jacob will leave the Promised Land to find a wife because he is picturing Jesus in a different way. We'll see this as the story continues to unfold in the chapters ahead with amazing and beautiful pictures.

Padan Aram is actually two words forming one name. Aram comes from a word that means to be high or to rise up.

Padan isn't a noun found in Hebrew but the word *padah* means to rescue or ransom. Adding the n at the end of the word is often used to produce a noun for a person or place. So Padan Aram may mean "Elevated Ransom."

This makes the procuring of Rebekah at Isaac's time much easier to understand and it also will shed light on how Jacob obtains his wives as well. There is a price which is paid, a bride price, and thus the name points to the work of Jesus as He obtained His bride.

A ransom is the release of property or a person in return for payment of a demanded price. In biblical lingo it is redemption from sin and its consequences.

The price for our sins was a high price indeed. It was truly an elevated ransom, just at the name Padan Aram implies. For Jesus to procure His bride, it involved leaving heaven (Jacob leaves the Promised Land) and coming to be among us, just as Jacob was told to take a wife from the house of Bethuel.

Bethuel means "daughter of God" and pictures the Jewish people as we noted in a previous sermon. From the house of these people, Jacob is told

to take a wife from the daughters of Laban. His name means “white” or “brick.” In the Bible, white is a symbol of purity.

Therefore, procuring a bride from this family is a picture of those who are purified and who will become a part of God's people. Jesus speaks of this in John 4:35

“Do you not say, ‘There are still four months and *then* comes the harvest’? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest!”

There is a harvest being conducted in the people of the world. Those who call on Jesus are purified and made spotless and white. They are a part of the harvest of good grain which Jesus is speaking about.

II. The Blessing Follows the Charge

The charge was given, to take a wife from the house of Bethuel and not from the daughters of Canaan. Now Isaac bestows his blessing upon Jacob.

The important thing to Jacob is that by receiving this blessing from his father, he knows that he has been forgiven for what he did by obtaining the blessing of the firstborn through deceit. He may have been worried about this, but he can now feel that all is forgiven.

³“May God Almighty bless you,

In Genesis 17:1, these words were spoken to Abraham –

“When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, “*I am* Almighty God; walk before Me and be blameless.”

Isaac invokes the same name, God Almighty or El Shaddai in order to bless Jacob. This revelation of God, El Shaddai, is of existence and performance. It is to Him that Isaac calls for the blessing. He is the eternally lasting, absolute, all powerful God. His nature is unchangeable and yet He causes change in His creation.

^{3 (con't)} And make you fruitful and multiply you,

A few verses later in Genesis 17, El Shaddai said this to Abraham – “I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you.”

Isaac calls for this same blessing on Jacob now.

^{3 (con't)} That you may be an assembly of peoples;

Here is a remarkable phrase, *liq-hal ammim*. The Hebrew word *qahal* will later be applied to the people of God as an assembly. It is where the Greek word *ecclesia* comes from and from which we derive the modern notion of the called out church.

This blessing then is looking forward to all of the assembled people of God throughout the ages and off into eternity.

⁴ And give you the blessing of Abraham,

The blessing of Abraham is one which comprises the land, the multitude of descendants, the line of the Messiah, and thus the filling of the world with the knowledge of the gospel. Paul says in Galatians 3 that this promise includes us in the church –

“...just as Abraham “believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.” ⁷ Therefore know that *only* those who are of faith are sons of Abraham. ⁸ And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, *saying*, “In you all the nations shall be blessed.” ⁹ So then those who *are* of faith are blessed with believing Abraham.” (6-9)

This promise then encompasses the major doctrine of justification by faith. This includes redemption, forgiveness, the sealing of the Holy Spirit, and so on. All of this is tied up in what we would consider “the blessing of Abraham.”

It is an exclusive blessing. It was given to Isaac, but not to Ishmael. It is given now to Jacob, but not to Esau. It is a central point of the biblical narrative and it all surrounds around the Person of Jesus.

^{4 (con't)} **To you and your descendants with you,**

Unlike his father and his grandfather who are noted for one son in particular, Jacob, or Israel, will be noted for 12 sons. One will lead to the Messiah, but all 12 of his sons will participate in the blessings of the assembled people of God.

From the time of Jacob on, the Bible will speak of Israel as a collective unit of people. Some will fall out of favor, but God will always keep a remnant of each of each tribe as a special people.

^{4 (con't)} **That you may inherit the land In which you are a stranger,**

Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob to a large degree dwelt as pilgrims in the land. The same terminology will be used of others later, but the people of Israel will inherit the land as their own. They will live in it, build in it, and strive with God in it. The land is given to them.

In a fuller sense though, the Land of Canaan is a picture of heaven for the believer. It is the place we will eventually inherit and there we will dwell in the presence of God, just as God dwelt among the Israelites. Our inheritance is an eternal one and our guarantee of entry is the realization of the Messianic blessings found in Jesus.

^{4 (con't)} **Which God gave to Abraham.”**

Jacob is being sent away from his home, off to another country where he will work and be cheated. He won't return again for many years and he will have to look back on Isaac's words now and forward in faith to the realization of those promises.

The promises of Abraham are, to him, promises which can only be seen through eyes of faith. The times ahead for Jacob will be difficult and the future will be unsure except as he relies on the surety of God and his word.

The blessing to Jacob is no less sure and truthful to us. Let's read the blessing again as a whole and then determine to hold fast to it, just as God expects us to –

³ “May God Almighty bless you, And make you fruitful and multiply you, That you may be an assembly of peoples; ⁴ And give you the blessing of Abraham, To you and your descendants with you, That you may inherit the land In which you are a stranger, Which God gave to Abraham.”

We are this assembly and we await the land to which our eyes are lifted, the heavenly Mount Zion which is coming soon to His faithful people.

III. Esau... Tries Again

⁵ **So Isaac sent Jacob away, and he went to Padan Aram, to Laban the son of Bethuel the Syrian, the brother of Rebekah, the mother of Jacob and Esau.**

Rebekah is called “the mother of Jacob and Esau.” The Bible now firmly establishes Jacob first and places him above Esau. The prophecy given to her when the children were still in her womb is fully realized right here. The older shall serve the younger.

From the narrative which is coming, it will seem as if Jacob took a few provisions and left all by himself and this is what the account seems to imply and which most people who have read the Bible have in their mind. But this isn't the case as I showed last week.

We don't know how many people Jacob will travel with, but we do know that Deborah, Rebekah's wet nurse and life long companion, went with him. She was probably the one who delivered Rebekah's children, including Jacob, and now she will be the one who will probably oversee the birth of Jacob's children.

For a woman who is mentioned by name only once in the Bible, she has played an immensely important role in the history leading to Jesus. We know she goes along now because Genesis 35:8 says that she was with Jacob on his return from his journey.

But no mention is made of him ever coming back to see his family during those years and what it later states implies he never did. Therefore, at least one person, Deborah, whose name means “Bee” and is a picture of the word of God, went with him. Even though she is never mentioned, we do know this is so.

⁶ Esau saw that Isaac had blessed Jacob and sent him away to Padan Aram to take himself a wife from there, *and that* as he blessed him he gave him a charge, saying, “You shall not take a wife from the daughters of Canaan,”

Unlike Jacob who is setting out in faith and taking with him the word of God, Esau looks in the wrong direction for restoration. He sees that Jacob was blessed by his father even though he acted deceitfully. Then he sees that he’s been sent away to get a wife that isn’t from the daughters of Canaan.

The way Esau perceives the world is sad because he only looks at the surface of things and attempts to have things rectified in ways that only makes everything worse. In him and the things he does, we see a type of person who stumbles over the stumbling block.

What is so simple and which requires no real effort can be the most difficult thing of all. God wants faith, not deeds. Once we exercise faith, He looks to our deeds done in faith, not those with external pretence. Esau keeps missing this as do so many in the world.

They stand at the door of Christianity, but they never enter into it. Instead, they use a hammer and nails to shut it even tighter than it was at the beginning. This is works-based religion, not a faith based relationship. This is Esau.

⁷ and that Jacob had obeyed his father and his mother and had gone to Padan Aram.

God instructs us to obey our parents for a reason. He wants to be our Father, but it can only happen through obedience. Jesus demonstrated this as is noted in Hebrews –

“...though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. ⁹ And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him,...” (5:8, 9)

Philippians tells us that because of His obedience God highly exalted Him and gave Him the name which is above every name.

Esau sees this trait in his brother as well. Jacob went to Paddan Aram as instructed and from there he will obtain a wife. The distance is about 480 miles from where they are in Beersheba.

For Esau to go there would be a long journey. It would mean a long time away from his family and he'd be unable to try to regain Isaac's favor during the time he was gone. He is unwilling to pay the elevated ransom - just as Adam failed. But Esau has a problem that needs to be fixed as we see in the next verse...

⁸ Also Esau saw that the daughters of Canaan did not please his father Isaac.

Esau put two and two together, finally, and came to the realization that his dad wasn't happy with his wives. It took a while for him to clue in. He got married at 40 and he's 77 now, so after a mere 37 years, he figures it out. The local women make Isaac unhappy. As the verse literally says, they were “evil in his eyes.”

If you notice, it doesn't mention Rebekah in this verse. This is a clear indication that Esau doesn't care what his mother thinks at all. Instead, he is thinking about his father and how he can regain the favor and the blessing, rather than actually pleasing his parents.

⁹So Esau went to Ishmael and took Mahalath the daughter of Ishmael, Abraham's son, the sister of Nebajoth, to be his wife in addition to the wives he had.

As I said, it's a long way to Padan Aram and so instead of doing what might have been pleasing to his parents, he goes to marry a daughter of Ishmael. The reason he did this is because Ishmael is a son of Abraham and he is thinking that this will make Isaac happy.

There is a problem with this though. Ishmael was removed from the house and it is Isaac who became the son of promise. Ishmael, as was noted in previous sermons, is a son of Hagar who is a picture of the law. Paul very clearly explains this in Galatians 4.

No descendant of Ishmael is found in Jesus' genealogy because the law is of works. It is faith, not works, which please God. If you see, Esau is a picture of fallen man. Instead of exercising faith and traveling to Padan Aram to obtain a wife to make his father happy, he goes to Ishmael, a picture of works, to do so.

This girl he marries is named Mahalath and the name very well describes the situation. Her name basically means "sad song." It would be in Hebrew what we would call "the blues." And Esau's attempt at finding favor will result in exactly that – the blues.

He is doing what religions all around the world do every day, working to please God instead of exercising faith to please Him. This is the stumbling block that Esau trips over once again. He is trusting in his deeds to please his father instead of doing what his father would have him do.

The life and lesson of Esau continues just as it has all along. He keeps looking in the wrong place and expecting the right result.

A good parallel of this attitude is found in the Judges chapter 17. Let me read it to you so that you can see someone who follows the same pattern as Esau. He goes from one bad decision to another and expects a different outcome –

¹ Now there was a man from the mountains of Ephraim, whose name *was* Micah. ² And he said to his mother, “The eleven hundred *shekels* of silver that were taken from you, and on which you put a curse, even saying it in my ears—here *is* the silver with me; I took it.”

And his mother said, “*May you be* blessed by the LORD, my son!” ³ So when he had returned the eleven hundred *shekels* of silver to his mother, his mother said, “I had wholly dedicated the silver from my hand to the LORD for my son, to make a carved image and a molded image; now therefore, I will return it to you.” ⁴ Thus he returned the silver to his mother. Then his mother took two hundred *shekels* of silver and gave them to the silversmith, and he made it into a carved image and a molded image; and they were in the house of Micah.

⁵ The man Micah had a shrine, and made an ephod and household idols; and he consecrated one of his sons, who became his priest. ⁶ In those days *there was* no king in Israel; everyone did *what was* right in his own eyes.

⁷ Now there was a young man from Bethlehem in Judah, of the family of Judah; he *was* a Levite, and was staying there. ⁸ The man departed from the city of Bethlehem in Judah to stay wherever he could find *a place*. Then he came to the mountains of Ephraim, to the house of Micah, as he journeyed.

⁹ And Micah said to him, “Where do you come from?”

So he said to him, “I *am* a Levite from Bethlehem in Judah, and I am on my way to find *a place* to stay.”

¹⁰ Micah said to him, “Dwell with me, and be a father and a priest to me, and I will give you ten *shekels* of silver per year, a suit of clothes, and your sustenance.” So the Levite went in. ¹¹ Then the Levite was content to dwell with the man; and the young man became like one of his sons to him. ¹² So Micah consecrated the Levite, and the young man became his priest, and lived in the house of Micah. ¹³ Then Micah said, “Now I know that the LORD will be good to me, since I have a Levite as priest!”

Explain what happens to the priest and the idols...

Here we are, all of us are fallen sons of Adam just like Esau. What we need to do is to move from the curse to the promise. We need to transfer our citizenship from the devil to the Lord. We need to move from wrong thinking to right thinking.

We can spend our whole life making the wrong choices and continuing on down the wrong path, or we can determine to do it the Lord's way.

If you're trusting in some *thing* that you do in order to make God happy, then what you're doing is actually trusting in yourself. This is self-idolatry. What we need to do is to put ourselves aside and trust in what God has already done, just as Jacob did.

He was trusting in the promise and he received the blessing. Only after that did he accomplish his deeds. Esau is doing exactly the opposite, trusting in his deeds to secure and obtain the promise and receive a blessing.

Closing Verse: I have stretched out My hands all day long to a rebellious people, Who walk in a way *that is* not good, According to their own thoughts; Isaiah 65:2

Next Week – Genesis 28:10-21 (A Ladder to Heaven)

Two Sons, Different Paths

Then Isaac called Jacob and gave him a blessing and a charge
He said, You shall not take a wife from the daughters of Canaan
Arise, go to Padan Aram, the house of Bethuel, my word discharge
Take a wife from the daughters of your mother's brother Laban

And this is the blessing that he spoke over Jacob his son
He pronounced it fully until he was done

“May God Almighty bless you,
And make you fruitful and multiply you,
That you may be an assembly of peoples;
And give you the blessing of Abraham,
To you and your descendants with you,
That you may inherit the land
In which you are a stranger,
Which God gave to Abraham.”

So Isaac sent Jacob away, off to Padam Aram he went

To Laban the son of Bethuel the Syrian he did go
To the brother of Rebekah he was sent
She, the mother of Jacob and Esau as you know
Esau saw that Isaac had blessed Jacob and sent him away
To Padan Aram to take himself a wife from there
And that as he blessed him he did say
You shall not take a wife from Canaan's daughters, not from there

And Esau saw that Jacob had obeyed his father
And also his mother and gone to Padan Aram
Also he saw that for the daughters of Canaan Isaac had a bother
They did not please him like those of the family of Abraham
So to Ishmael to take from him a daughter, Esau went
Mahalath the daughter of Ishmael Abraham's son
She, the sister of Nebajoth came to Esau's tent
Along with his other wives, she was an addition

What can we learn from these two men?
What lessons do the stories of their lives tell?
God is showing us once again
The proper path to heaven or the one that leads to hell
God loves His creatures and desires all to come willingly
But He leaves the choices up to each of us
We can by faith live out lives which pleasingly
Are directed to His Son, our Lord and Savior Jesus

Our we can turn from Him and follow our own will
But in the end that is a sorrowful, bitter pill
Let each of us come with grateful hearts to our Lord and King
And shower him with songs of thankful praise
With our tongues let us always and forever sing
Of the greatness of our God for blessed eternal days

Hallelujah and Amen...