

Genesis – Lesson 22

Jacob and the Blessing

Read Genesis 27:1-40.

1. (a) What do you learn about the *physical* condition of Isaac from vv. 1-4? What do you learn about his *spiritual* condition?

Isaac is *old*; his eyesight is “*dim*” or he has gone blind. He requests Esau to go out and hunt for him, probably because his own physical strength is too limited now to go with him. Isaac wishes to bless Esau, in spite of the fact that Esau does not deserve it (see 1b below). This would imply that Isaac’s spiritual condition is also poor; he continues to favor his firstborn son and promises him the blessing, even though he should *not* have done that.

- (b) List at least three reasons why Esau was not *entitled* to receive the blessing from Isaac. Which of these is the most *significant* as to why Isaac should not have even considered such a thing?

Esau was not entitled to receive the *family blessing* from Isaac because 1) he sold his birthright away to Jacob, 2) he despised the birthright itself (as something unnecessary), and 3) God had foretold that the younger child would be the blessed child in the family. It is this *third* reason that Isaac should have considered; if God had purposed that *Jacob* receive the blessing, then Isaac should never even have *considered* Esau as the target for such. Instead, Isaac’s personal love for Esau overrode his sensibilities here, and he attempted to give Esau a blessing he didn’t deserve. NOTE: Isaac planned to do this without his wife’s knowledge; the implication of Rebekah overhearing the conversation (v. 5) is that Isaac was going behind her back.

- (c) How would you *apply* Revelation 3:15-17 to Isaac and Esau? What is the *warning* for us?

Isaac, in this situation had a *lukewarm* faith; his trust in the Lord wavered here, and his natural love for Esau nearly ruined the carefully laid plans of God for Jacob. He had a *blind-spot* for Esau, which put *both* of his sons in jeopardy. The warning for us is: we must watch out for those same kinds of *blind-spots* in our own lives. We all have areas where we are *naturally* inclined to trust in ourselves rather than in God, putting something or someone in such high esteem that we fail to keep our eyes fixed upon the plans of God by faith.

2. (a) List the *specific* steps that Rebekah took to deceive Isaac. Why do you think that Jacob *went along* with his mother’s plans?

Rebekah tried to *fake* Isaac into thinking that Jacob was Esau returning from the hunt, by 1) cooking a meal of young goats into a dish for Isaac, 2) dressing Jacob in Esau’s clothes so that he would smell like his elder brother, 3) taking the skins of the goats and putting them on Jacob’s hands and neck so that he would feel like his brother, and 4) telling Jacob what to say to convince Isaac that he was Esau. Jacob probably went along with the ruse because 1) he trusted his mother, 2) he wanted the blessing for himself, 3) he was aware of the prophecy regarding his position, 4) he owned the birthright, and 5) it was a part of his nature to be a deceiver (e.g. he had already done such a thing to Esau; see also v. 36).

- (b) How did Rebekah *fail* in this situation? What should she (and Jacob) have done *instead*?

Rebekah deceived Isaac into giving Jacob the blessing, a deception that *may* have been unnecessary. The *better* approach (theoretically) would have been to *confront* Isaac with what she had heard and remind him of the prophecy of God and the birthright now belonging to Jacob. It is possible, however, that Rebekah believed that such a confrontation *might* not have worked, so she decided to use trickery instead.

3. (a) What was the *purpose* of the blessing given to the eldest child? How do we do this today?

The blessing had multiple purposes: 1) it served as a *will*, outlining the inheritance being given to the eldest (implied from vv. 27-28), 2) it served to establish (prophetically) *the future* of the eldest son (v. 29a), 3) it served as a *confirmation* of the value of the eldest son in the mind of the father and in the life of the family (v. 29b-c). Although we do not *specifically* give blessings to our children today in this *verbal* (or prophetic) form, we do use such things as *wills* to transfer our wealth to our children and to establish their importance in the family. Other kinds of blessings are transferred through specific events in the child's life, such as graduations, weddings, grandchildren, etc.

- (b) From vv. 27-29, what did the blessing *give* to Jacob? How is this *connected* to 26:23-25?

Jacob received: 1) the blessings of the land (given to him from Abraham; v. 28), 2) the blessing of a future world leadership (v. 29a), 3) the leadership of the family (v. 29b), and 4) the *Abrahamic* blessing (v. 29c cf. 12:3). Isaac is *passing along* the things he received from God at Beersheba; the promises of God are now being passed on to Jacob for the future.

- (c) From vv. 39-40, what *curses* did Isaac give to Esau when he asked for a blessing? Why?

Esau received: 1) the curse of an infertile, non-prosperous land (v. 39b), 2) the curse of constant battle with those around him (v. 40a), and 3) the curse of having to serve Jacob and his descendants (v. 40b). Isaac had already established Jacob as the rightful owner of all that he had; Isaac had nothing more to give Esau. These curses are given because Isaac recognizes that (from now on) Esau will have great antipathy towards his brother, and these curses will be *realized* in the reality that would unfold between them. In other words, Isaac now knows that Esau will truly *hate* his brother, and this hatred will produce the kinds of results spoken of here. Esau will seal *his own fate* by his actions, not because Isaac has proclaimed it to be so. Although Jacob deceived Isaac to get his blessing, Isaac now realizes that God's plans cannot be thwarted, and Esau will go *willing* along the path that he chooses for himself.

Read Genesis 27:41-28:9.

4. (a) From these verses, list the *consequences* of Jacob's deception for those around him.

Jacob's deception causes: 1) Esau to hate his brother, to the point of seeking to kill him after Isaac dies, 2) Rebekah having to deceive Isaac *again* to get Jacob sent away, 3) Jacob having to go and live with Laban, and 4) Esau marrying a wife from the descendants of Ishmael (see 4b below).

- (b) What was Esau's *motive* in verses 26:8-9? What does this tell you about his *nature*?

Esau married a daughter of Ishmael, a woman named Mahalath, in order to *spite* his father. Because he knew that Isaac detested such a marriage, Esau added this woman to his household in order to upset his father, all as a direct result of Isaac blessing Jacob and sending him to Laban's house.

Read Genesis 28:10-22.

5. (a) What is the significance of the "*stairway*" that Jacob saw in his dream (see John 1:51)?

In his dream, Jacob sees a stairway (or ladder) extending from heaven to the earth, and the angels of God were walking up and down upon it. The stairway is representative (in this context) to the blessing of God coming down from heaven to Jacob. God speaks from the top of the ladder (in heaven) repeating to Jacob all of the promises made to Abraham and Isaac (see 5b below). For Jacob, it is a *visible* instrument demonstrating the grace of God. Jesus alludes to this imagery when calling his initial disciples. In this case, Jesus pictures *himself* as the stairway; the means of God's grace between heaven and earth. Now, in Jesus, all of the promises of God made to his people by grace come down from heaven *on Jesus himself*. Jesus becomes the "conduit" of God's grace to humanity.

(b) What *specific* promise did God repeat to Jacob? What does the term "*Bethel*" mean here?

God repeats a number of promises to Jacob that he has already made to Abraham and Isaac: 1) many offspring, 2) a blessing from his offspring to the whole world, and 3) the everlasting presence of God. But, God *specifically* tells Jacob that the land upon which he is sleeping will also be his, much like God had promised to his father and grandfather before him. The term *Bethel*, which means "house of God," is placed by Jacob upon this land because this is where God met with him *personally* for the first time. Jacob sees this land as a place where God "lives," and a place that will belong to God (through his descendants) into perpetuity.