

ISAAC: HIS SONS (Genesis 25:19 – 34)

If you are new or visiting; a special warm welcome to you. We trust you enjoy your time with us.

Today we will be having communion. If it is your practice to participate in this we welcome you to join with us in celebrating the Lord's Supper. If this is not your custom or if you are unsure of what to do please just pass the emblems (bread and wine) to the person next to you.

INTRODUCTION

Isaac was 40 years old when he married Rebekah. By this time Abraham is 139 years of age and, in the words of Gen.24:1, is "old and well advanced in years". After Sarah's death Abraham remarries (25:1).

Rebekah, after 19 years of marriage, has been unable to have any children. Isaac, aware of God's covenant to his father, which has been confirmed to him (26:3,4), knew that if this promise was to be kept then he would have to have physical descendants. Note the contrast between Abraham and Isaac:

Abraham	Isaac
- manufactures his own solution	- awaits God's solution
- works	- prays
- unsatisfactory outcome	- satisfactory outcome

BIRTH ORDER DECREED (25: 19-26)

God's Sovereign Choice

In direct answer to Isaac's prayer, Rebekah conceives. As the pregnancy progresses, there seems to be unusual movement and discomfort in the womb so Rebekah inquires of the Lord. The answer is not only surprising ("two nations are in your womb"), but marks a new insight into God's intentions ("the older will serve the younger") – something that was contrary to Near Eastern custom.

An explanation of this passage is found in Romans 9:10-13 - a section of scripture that deals with the absolute sovereignty of God over the affairs of men. We note:

That Esau and Jacob had the same father (they were equal in terms of lineage)

Prior to their birth none of the elements of their character (good or bad) were known or had been revealed. They were thus morally equal.

BUT in order that God's redemptive purposes might stand Rebekah was told, "*the older will serve the younger*". God's call is not on the basis of what we deserve (none of us deserve his mercy), nor is it on the basis of what we have done (for we all fall short of his standard of perfection), but it is on the basis of His grace alone. The primary theological debate is the grounds upon which this grace is extended. Is it because God foresaw a potential for faith, or is it because God's electing grace pre-disposed the will to respond to his call? Scripture does not reveal the answer to this issue. However, it assures us that:

God is never unjust in his dealings with the human race, either collectively or individually (Rom.9:14).

He desires that none should perish (II Pet 3:9) and that any who turn to him will be saved (John 3:16).

He allows us to reap what we sow (Gal.6:7,8).

He is absolutely sovereign – his purposes will come to fruition.

There is a higher purpose far beyond that which we can see (Rom.11:33).

We should never deceive ourselves into thinking, (a) That some element of our character made us attractive to God, or, (b) That our character is so bad that he can't clean it completely.

BIRTHRIGHT DESPISED (25: 27-34)

Esau's Sacrilegious Choice

We note the contrast between Esau and Jacob.

Esau	Jacob
A skilful hunter - liked the open country	A quiet man who stayed among the tents
A taste for catching wild game	A taste for cooking
Loved by Isaac	Loved by Rebekah

Normally the eldest son was rewarded with honour and given two shares in the family inheritance rather than the single share given to each of the younger brothers – this was his birthright. Leadership of the clan and guardianship of its direction were his responsibilities.

