

Genesis 25 “Passing the Mantel”

Intro:

Genesis 25 serves as a conclusion of the life and ministry of Abraham.

After the death of Sarah, Abraham:

- Remarried Keturah and had 6 additional children
- Passed his inheritance to Isaac
- Gave gifts to his other sons and sent them East
- Finally Abraham died at the age of 175 and was buried alongside Sarah in the cave of Machpelah

The cave was part of the field Abraham purchased from Ephron

Genesis 23:20

So the field and the cave that is in it were deeded to Abraham by the sons of Heth as property for a burial place

According to the Jewish virtual library

The Cave of Machpelah is the world's most ancient Jewish site and the second holiest place for the Jewish people, after Temple Mount in Jerusalem.

3700 years ago, Abraham purchased the cave and the adjoining field

Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Sarah, Rebecca, and Leah were all later buried in the same Cave

The structure above the cave was built during the Second Temple Period (about two thousand years ago) by Herod, King of Judea, providing a place for gatherings and Jewish prayers at the graves of the Patriarchs.

This uniquely impressive building is the only one that stands intact and still fulfills its original function after thousands of years.

Foreign conquerors and invaders used the site for their own purposes, depending on their religious orientation:

- The Byzantines and Crusaders transformed it into a church
- About 700 years ago, the Muslim Mamelukes conquered Hebron, declared the structure a mosque and forbade entry to Jews, who were not allowed past the seventh step on a staircase outside the building.

Abraham's life is summed up in one final verse:

Genesis 25:8

Then Abraham breathed his last and died in a good old age, an old man and full of years, and was gathered to his people.

Abraham's life is described as full although he died with nothing to call his own except a burial site for the family and a heritage of faith to pass on to those who would follow

Genesis 25 also brings us to a transition in the narrative

Genesis 25:11

And it came to pass, after the death of Abraham, that God blessed his son Isaac. And Isaac dwelt at Beer Lahai Roi.

Although Abraham dies, the work of The Lord will continue. This is something that is seen time and time again through scripture

- Abe - Isaac - Jacob
- Moses - Joshua
- Elijah - Elisha
- Jesus - 12
- Paul - Timothy

This puts upon us the responsibility to train up the next generation who will carry the mantle after we have passed

2 Timothy 2:2

And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.

AFTER giving a brief summary of the offspring of Ishmael, our attention turns to Isaac and the birth of his children

After waiting 40 years for a bride, the couple discovers that they are unable to have children.

It will be 20 years before Rebekah gets pregnant

Genesis 25:21

Now Isaac pleaded with the Lord for his wife, **because she was barren;** and the Lord granted his plea, and Rebekah his wife conceived.

We read that God responded to the cries of Isaac for his wife

In this we see the value of prayer as it relates to the issues of life .

God is heavily invested in answering this prayer for it is through the child that the Messiah will come.

Genesis 25:22

But the children struggled together within her; and she said, “If *all is well*, why *am I like this?*” So she went to inquire of the Lord.

Rebekah is concerned about her pregnancy because of how active the children are in the womb.

This is a common phenomenon, but was a brand new experience for Rebekah since this was her first pregnancy and she did not have the advice of her mother who lived 100's of miles away and her Sarah had died.

She too inquired of The Lord and learned that this struggle was symbolic of the life the two children would live

Genesis 25:23

And the Lord said to her:

“Two **nations** are in your womb,
Two **peoples** shall be separated from your body;
One people shall be stronger than the other,
And the older shall serve the younger.”

From the text we learn that God promises:

- Twins
- Each would be successful
- One would be superior in some way
- It would be the younger who would surpass the older
- ***This is a subtle reference to the promise of Abe and Isaac being passed on to the younger of their two children; Jacob.***

Paul in the New Testament referred to this part of the promise as an early form of the Gospel

Galatians 3:8

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."

The struggle they face in the womb is symbolic of the life the two will live and particularly of the struggle Jacob will endure as he learns to wait upon and trust in The Lord

The Twins

Genesis 25:24

So when her days were fulfilled for her to give birth, indeed there were twins in her womb.

In fulfillment of the word they received from the Lord, Rebekah gave birth to paternal twin sons

- The firstborn was named Esau or "Hairy" and he became the father of the Edomites who inhabited the area near mount Sier.

Edom means red and was a nickname given to Esau because of the red lentil soup he loved and gave his birthright for

Genesis 25:30

And Esau said to Jacob, "Please feed me with that same red stew, for I am weary." Therefore his name was called Edom.

- The second, Jacob or "heal catcher"

Esau's name was chosen from his appearance, Jacob's for his actions and would reveal the character of this young man

It is fascinating to me that the dominant character traits we saw in our children are still being displayed in their lives. Some of them will be their battle the rest of their lives just like it was for Jacob

The Bible comments on these events

Malachi 1:2-3

"I have loved you," says the Lord.

"Yet you say, 'In what way have You loved us?'

Was not Esau Jacob's brother?"

Says the Lord.

"Yet Jacob I have loved;

But Esau I have hated,

And laid waste his mountains and his heritage

For the jackals of the wilderness."

This text uses the birth order of the twins as an illustration of the sovereign choice of God that expresses His love for us.

The text in no way implies that God chose one for heaven and the other for hell. Instead that God chose one to fulfill the promises given to Abraham and one was not chosen.

As time moves on we will see good and godly behavior from each of the boys

Romans 9 Paul uses the birth of Esau and Jacob to illustrate the sovereign work of God in salvation

Many of the early church converts were Jewish. They watched as multitudes of gentiles came to faith, while their own countrymen were rejecting Christ as the Messiah.

Those who knew the Scriptures were aware of the prophecies regarding a great work of God that would be accomplished among the gentiles. However they had assumed that these promises would be fulfilled after the Messiah set up His earthly kingdom

They struggled to understand God's future role for the nation of Israel. Romans 9-11 is designed to answer their questions

H A Ironside gives the following outline for Romans 9-11

- **Romans 9** – God’s past dealing with Israel in electing grace
- **Romans 10** – God’s present dealing with Israel in discipline
- **Romans 11** – God’s future dealing with Israel in fulfilling prophecy

In discussing election, Paul points out that “*nor are they all children because they are the seed of Abraham, but it is written ‘In Isaac your seed shall be called’*”

God sovereignly passed over Ishmael as the recipient of the promise and selected Isaac

Bringing up the birth of Esau and Jacob further develops this same truth

Romans 9:10-13

And not only *this*, but when Rebecca also had conceived by one man, *even* by our father Isaac (for *the children* not yet being born, nor having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works but of Him who calls),

it was said to her, “The older shall serve the younger.”

As it is written, “Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated.”

It is important to note that no where in the text is it implied that Esau was rejected from the love of God or the offer of eternal life, he was simply rejected from being the one who would carry the seed of the coming Messiah

His point is that God hand selected Abe, Isaac and Jacob as children of promise. He then selected all those descendants of Jacob and even the Gentiles who will respond to Him by faith

Romans 9:32-33

Why? Because they did not seek it by faith, but as it were, by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumbling stone. As it is written:
“Behold, I lay in Zion a stumbling stone and rock of offense,
And **whoever believes on Him** will not be put to shame.”

Before moving on a verse is given that serves to sum up the character of the twins

Genesis 25:27

So the boys grew. And Esau was a skillful hunter, a man of the field; but Jacob was a **mild man**, dwelling in tents.

Esau was a skilled hunter who loved the fields

Jacob was **mild** man who lived in tents

Mild - two meanings

- Ordinary
- Ethical or moral

Same word used three times to describe Job

Was not a sissy, but was an ordinary man who was concerned about the things of The Lord - although he struggled

The term mild is played against the word skilled

Two short vignettes give insight into the life of the boys

- First the story of the stew - Genesis 25:29-34
- Second the story of the blessing - Genesiordinate will get to that one next week

We read that Jacob cooked stew and Esau hunted

We see in this story both the failure of Esau and the seeds of the problem Jacob will struggle with most of his life

Esau sold his birthright for a bowl of lentil soup

Gen 25:34 gives insight into the motivation behind Esau's actions

Genesis 25:34

And Jacob gave Esau bread and stew of lentils; then he ate and drank, arose, and went his way. Thus Esau **despised** *his* birthright.

He despised his birthright

Despised - to look down upon, or to place little value on.

Esau did not put much value in an ancient promise given to his grandfather regarding a seed that would bless the world.

To him something that would bring immediate gratification was way more important than spiritual things.

He is not alone in this kind of thinking

- Rich fool
- Rich, young ruler
- Demas

Esau actions are used as an example in Hebrews

Hebrews 12:16-17

Lest there be any fornicator or **profane** person like Esau, who for one morsel of food sold his birthright

For you know that afterward, when he wanted to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought it diligently with tears.

Esau is used as an example of a person who values the natural above the spiritual, the temporal above the eternal or the earthly above the heavenly.

He is also used to illustrate faulty repentance.

It is not that he sought repentance and was unable to receive it. That is contrary to everything we know about God and salvation.

Instead we must understand the passage to mean that he sought the inheritance with weeping.

When he came to realize what he had given up he began to weep and cry out to get that back.

One thing that we must remember about repentance is that while it will restore us back to God and put us on the right track of life it does not undo what we have done.

A thief that has repented does not steal, or a murderer unmurder, we cannot undo what has been done but we can get back to the things of The Lord and allow Him to redeem what we have messed up.

A young couple that backslides, gets pregnant out of wedlock can repent, get back on track and raise a godly child with all the potential in the world. On the other hand in many cases one bad turn leads to a series of bad turns.

Whatever you may have done to get where you are today it is time to get off that road and get back to walking with Jesus

William Barclay put it like this:

“The Greek word for repentance means to change the mind. It is better to say that Esau could not change his mind. It is not that he was barred from forgiveness, but the grim fact is that there are certain choices that cannot be unmade and certain consequences that God cannot undo...” (He goes on to cite a young lady losing her virginity as an example)

“We do well to remember that there is a certain finality in life... There are certain things in which a man cannot change his mind but must abide forever with the decisions that he has made”

This passage also gives insight into the seeds of Jacob’s further struggles

Before his birth Jacob was promised the blessing of Abraham. Although everything in the natural world seemed to fight against this promise being fulfilled.

- He was the second born in a culture that that esteemed birth order
- His father loved his older brother and was unwilling to live according to the promise of God

Instead of waiting on God to accomplish His promise, Jacob constantly took matters into his own hand. We will see him struggle with this until he finally gives in later in life