

The God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, *and You*

Genesis 26:1-33

Intro: Modern Day Marcionism

“The God of the Old Testament and Jesus in the New Testament are two different gods.” That was the teaching of a second century heretic named Marcion. He hated the picture of God portrayed (in his perception) in the OT.

Kevin DeYoung said it like this, “Marcion’s theological errors (and there were many) came from one main root: he refused to believe that the God of the Old Testament was the same as the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ. Marcion simply could not believe in a God full of wrath and justice. So he threw away the Old Testament and took for his Bible a truncated version of Luke’s Gospel and selectively edited versions of Paul’s epistles. When all the cutting and pasting was finished, Marcion had the Christianity he wanted: a God of goodness and nothing else; a message of inspiring moral uplift; a Bible that does away with the uncomfortable bits about God’s wrath and hell.”

[\(https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/kevin-deyoung/marcion-getting-unhitched-old-testament/\)](https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/kevin-deyoung/marcion-getting-unhitched-old-testament/)

Lest we think Marcion's error is ancient history, there are still Marcionites in the modern day, just different variations. I think of Andy Stanely (well-known pastor in ATL) who said, "Peter, James, Paul elected to unhitch the Christian faith from their Jewish scriptures [the OT], and my friends, we must as well."

(Quote from <https://albertmohler.com/2018/08/10/getting-unhitched-old-testament-andy-stanley-aims-heresy/>)

Stanley says *that* because he thinks the OT can be a stumbling block in evangelism. And so, he concludes, when talking to non-Christians, we should avoid the odd stories of the OT that might be off-putting to non-Christians and just focus on Jesus and the resurrection.

I must admit, I can see why that's a temptation. If we're not careful, we can (perhaps subtly and subconsciously) slip into a form of Marcionism. *There have been times when we get a decent number of visitors to our church, many of whom may not yet be Christians. And I've had fleeting thoughts like, "Man, this passage in Genesis might be off-putting to them." Like when I preached Gen. 19, on the judgment of Sodom and Gomorrah. And for a second, I might wish we were in a NT book.*

The spirit of Marcionism is alive and well today, and we must resist it...BECAUSE of verses that say things like...

- Psalm 102:27, “You are the same, and your years have no end.”
- Malachi 3:6, “I the LORD do not change.”
- James 1:17, In “the Father of lights...there is no variation or shadow due to change.”
- Hebrews 13:8, “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.”
- Psalm 90:2, “From everlasting to everlasting you are God.”

God is the same God from one generation to the next. That point is clear in Genesis 26.

God has made promises to Abraham that would be fulfilled well beyond Abraham’s lifetime. So, those promises needed to be passed down from one generation to the next. And that’s exactly what is happening here. The entire passage is a repetition of Abraham’s life in the life of Isaac. In other words, the same kinds of things that happened to Abraham happen to Isaac too.

Now, why would the author record events that basically repeat what we’ve already seen? In the

words of Bruce Waltke, Moses is showing “that Isaac’s God is the God of Abraham.” (Waltke, 367) There are six repetitions from the life of Abraham in the life of Isaac that make this point.

Repetition #1: Promise

God is about to give (almost) the exact same promise to Isaac that he did to Abraham, AND he does so as Isaac faces the same kind of difficult situation Abraham did. **[v1a]** You can already hear the to Abraham. The author is reminding us that Abraham experienced a famine, as well (ch12), that forced him to sojourn elsewhere. But he went all the way to Egypt. Where does Isaac go? **[v1b]**

Now that’s where Abraham sojourned in ch20. But this must be a different Abimelech, since this event takes place 70-75yrs after Abraham’s sojourning there. The name “Abimelech,” which means “My father is king,” is probably just a royal title carried from one generation to the next. BUT STILL it’s not a coincidence that Isaac goes to the same land ruled by a guy with that same title that his father went to.

But God tells Isaac NOT to go all the way to Egypt, like Abraham did in ch12. **[v2]** Why doesn't God want him going to Egypt? It seems, he doesn't want Isaac leaving the land of promise. And Egypt, as we know, is not gonna be a place of rest for the people of Israel. This would've meant something to the original readers who ended up in slavery in Egypt.

It's not time for the people of God to go there. So God tells Isaac to stay within the bounds of the land of promise. Notice *how* he tells him. **[vv3-5]** That's basically the same promise he gave to his father Abraham—land, offspring, and blessing. But two subtle differences.

First, he says, "I will be with you." He didn't say that explicitly to Abraham, though it was implied. The covenantal presence of God is the heart of this promise, and frankly, every promise God makes. What good would his promises be if they didn't include his presence?—if they didn't include HIM? All the good he promises to his people are ultimately a means of getting to him!

But there's another subtle difference in this promise to Isaac. Instead of saying, as he did to Abraham, "I will give you this LAND (singular)," he says, "I will give you all these LANDS (plural)." That, no doubt, highlights the full scope of the promised land—every portion of it will be inherited by the offspring of Isaac.

BUT I also think there's a hint here of the expansion of the land promise. It's not just gonna be one land; it'll be many. The promise from Abraham to Isaac is indeed the same in essence, but it's getting bigger and better. That's repetition #1: promise.

Repetition #2: Sin

See if you can pick up on any déjà vu in this next part. **[vv6-7]** Sound familiar? Abraham did the same thing!—twice before! Once in Egypt and another time here in Gerar. So Isaac waivers in his faith just like his father did at times. And this takes place RIGHT AFTER God gave this amazing promise, just like he did with Abraham! In ch12, God told Abraham he was gonna bless him and make him into a great nation, and then he goes to Egypt and lies about his wife Sarah.

We are so quick (aren't we?) to forget God's past promises and provisions when we feel the pressure of a precarious situation. But notice how the Lord protects Isaac and his wife. **[v8]**

They had been there "a long time" before anyone knew he was lying about Rebekah identity, which tells us, God was protecting them! And it wasn't until Isaac is caught "laughing" with his wife in a way that shows, they're not just brother and sister.

Your translation may say "caressing," which is probably what he's doing, but the word is "laughing." Remember, Isaac's name means "he laughs" and this word has been prominent in Genesis. It's the same word used of Sarah (Isaac's mom) when she, in bad faith, laughed at the thought she would ever get pregnant. It's the word used when Ishmael mocked Isaac.

It's a word that has come to be associated with "lacking faith." I think that's why the author uses it in this context. Isaac has been acting in little faith and now he's caught. Abimelech "just so happens" to be looking out his window at the

very time Isaac is playing around with his wife, like happy married couples do. So Abimelech confronts him. **[v9]** Do you hear Isaac's self-focus? "*I* thought...lest *I* die..." Listen, a tell-tale sign that you're not trusting God is when your focus is too much on yourself!

Now notice the way Abimelech responds, showing the similarity to way the Abimelech of Abraham's time responded. **[vv10-11]** That's basically the same way the first Abimelech responded.

Now, why do you think the author includes this story? Yes, to show the connection between Abraham and Isaac, but what connection? Surely it shows that, just as God's promise was not *ultimately* contingent upon how good or faithful Abraham would be, so too the continuation of that promise is not contingent upon how good or faithful Isaac would be. WHY? Because he's the same God! He's the God of grace!

Are you banking on that? Are you trusting *that* when you fail again and again? OR when you fail just like your parents did, even though you

swore you'd never be like them, then you start seeing glimpses of their sins in your life and you realize: God is the same God in your parents' generation as he is in yours. He's a God of grace.

God keeps his people from ruining his promises by their own sin. He did it with Abraham in a miraculous way—spoke to Abimelech in a dream and sent a plague on all of the people so they wouldn't touch Sarah. God can do that! But he can also keep us from ruining his plan by normal means of providence, as he does here with Isaac. Abimelech was looking out his window!

The point is: He will do it. He will not let the children of promise ruin themselves with their own sin. Surely you can think of times in your life when you thought: "I really screwed this up! God is done with me. He can't use me anymore. I'll just mess everything up!"

That kind of thinking, though giving the allusion of humility because you're so aware of how sinful you are, is actually very prideful! Who do you think you are that God can no longer use you? You think your sin is bigger than his grace?

No way. It's not an accident that the very next repetition highlights God's lavishing blessing on Isaac, just like he did with Abraham, even after he sinned. So consider...

Repetition #3: Blessing [vv12-13]

Remember what happened to Abraham after he left Egypt in ch12, and even after he left Gerar in ch20? The Lord blessed him with wealth. Same thing is happening with Isaac. This was a visible demonstration of the Lord's hand on Isaac. But it didn't come without trouble. **[vv14-15]**

So there's envy leading to conflict because water sources (namely, wells) were limited. That's a problem because Isaac's growing wealth means he's growing in cattle and servants who need water. But there isn't enough. Why? Because the people of Gerar (the Philistines) stopped up (filled with dirt) all the wells that Abraham had built when he lived there all those years before.

So this conflict is kind of self-inflicted! And it's possible that they stopped up these wells *because* they were envious of Isaac. They saw him prospering and they didn't want him

prospering in THEIR land. So this was an attempt to force Isaac out. Which is what happens. **[v16]**

Interestingly, those are the same words Pharaoh, king of Egypt, would later say about the people of Israel when they live in his land. Exodus 1:9, “The people of Israel are too many and too mighty for us.” So made them slaves. So when they read v16, it would’ve reminded them that the God who delivered Isaac from the Abimelech delivered them from Pharaoh. He doesn’t change!

So Isaac is forced to leave the land of Gerar because God was blessing him so much that the people became envious, which leads to even more conflict. And that takes us to...

Repetition #4: Conflict

Now as I read this next passage, be reminded of what happened to Abraham in ch21, when the servants of Abimelech took over a well that was his. **[vv17-18]** See what he’s doing? He’s reestablishing his father’s work—which would’ve been a whole lot of work! To make

these wells that the men of Gerar filled with dirt usable again, would've been a lot of work.

But it's worth it because, if you remember, owning wells in a land meant you owned that part of the land. So this is Isaac's attempt to reclaim the promise from God that his offspring would possess this land. But it doesn't go over well with the men of Gerar. **[vv19-20]**

"Esek" means "to dispute/contend." Apparently, Isaac loses out on it, and he just moves on. Instead of starting a battle over water, he tries another place. **[v21]** "Sitnah" means "quarrel/oppose," which Isaac chooses NOT to do again, demonstrating faith in the Lord to provide.

Which, by the way, is required in all forms of quarrelling. The reason why we give into conflict is because we don't trust God. What do we trust? Our own control. That's why we raise our voices and say hurtful things to people who are not doing what we want them to do. We crave control, but ironically, we are out of control.

Mark this: the most out of control people are those who crave control. But the most self-controlled people are those who trust God's control. That's what Isaac is doing. And God provides for him. **[v22]** "Rehoboth" means "space/room," showing God provided.

This conflict has many similarities to Abraham's prior conflict with the herdsman of Gerar. And both Abraham and Isaac handled it in faith, because they trust God to provide, which he did. And afterward, they both respond in worshiped.

Repetition #5: Worship

In both ch12 (after Abraham left Egypt) and ch21 (after he left Gerar) he responds to the Lord's provision with worship. But specifically, after Abraham left Gerar he heads to Beersheba to. Where do you think Isaac goes? **[v23]**

The connections are everywhere! And it's not a coincidence that, while Isaac is in that same place his father went, the Lord says these words to him in **[v24]**.

That's the first time in the Bible the title, "God of your father Abraham" is used. But it won't be the last. In fact, as God reveals himself to each successive generation of his people, he expands that self-revelation. He says here to Isaac, the second-generation promise-recipient, "I am the God of Abraham your father." Then in ch28, he'll say to Jacob, Isaac's son, "I am...the God of Abraham your father AND the God of Isaac."

And a few generations later in Ex. 3:15, he tells Moses to tell the people of Israel (who are the descendants of Jacob), "Say this to the people of Israel: The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.' This is my name forever, and this I am to be remembered throughout all generations."

Isn't that amazing? The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob, and the God of Israel is the same God across all generations. ALL generations. Not just their generations, but all future ones, including today. Which means, he is your God, as well, if you're part of his people.

Repetition #6: Covenant

Isaac and Abimelech make a covenant with each other, which is (not surprising) what Abraham and (the other) Abimelech did in ch21. **[vv26]**

Isaac seems to know what they want; they wanna make a peace treaty with him. But that's confusing to him. **[vv27-28a]** The very thing God promised to Isaac—and they see it! **[vv28b-29]**

Now this just feels fishy! They haven't done ONLY good to him. There was a lot of quarreling over wells. BUT, it is true, Abimelech and his men didn't harm Isaac or Rebekah after finding out he lied to them. Nevertheless, it's clear their motive is self-protection. "The Lord is blessing you," meaning, "You're gaining power. So let's make a covenant of peace with each other. Don't harm us!" And Isaac agrees. **[vv30-31]**

Now, I want you to see how this story ends. It began with a famine. Look how it closes. **[vv32-33]** One writer said, "No matter where Isaac was forced to dig, and no matter how often the Philistines stopped up his wells, he found water in the wilderness—because God was with him." (Ross, 463)

Implications of God's Immutability

That was true of Abraham. It'll be true of Jacob. It'll be true of Israel. And it's true of all the children of promise BECAUSE God Abraham is the God of Isaac. And the God of Isaac is the God of Jacob. And the God of Jacob, is the God of Israel. And the God of Israel, is the God of the church—people from every tribe, tongue, and nation. God is the same God yesterday, today, and forever. He hasn't changed.

And therefore, his promises haven't changed. The promises made to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Israel, are promises to us today. Why? Because, as 2 Cor. 1:20 puts it, "All the promises of God are yes and amen in Christ."

The promises of land and offspring and blessing are promises for all who are in Christ. But, as I said earlier, these promises mature and grow and get bigger and better across the storyline of the Bible. The ***promise of land*** expands to a promise of the whole world. The ***promise of offspring*** expands to the promise of a people from every tribe, tongue, nation, and language. The ***promise of blessing*** is fulfilled not in getting

material stuff but in all the blessings Christ achieved for us in the cross—the blessings of forgiveness and salvation and a relationship with God and eternity in heaven.

This is why God sent his Son Jesus...to secure all the promises he made to his people. **[GOSPEL APPEAL]** The reason God's promises to Abraham and Isaac and Jacob are for you who trust in Christ is because the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob is the God of YOU too! He doesn't change. He's the same.

Doesn't that bring you assurance? Imagine if the opposite was true? Imagine if God changed. How secure would you feel if his love for you was like the "Daisy Approach"? "He Loves me, loves me not..." You would have no assurance of salvation. You're not gonna go to hell because God decided on a whim to stop loving you.

Or think about his relationship with Abraham and Isaac (and Jacob and Israel and YOU)...that your faith (like theirs) is so up and down. One moment you're standing solid on the awesome promises of God and you feel like, "Come on

world! Gimme your best shot! I can take it. I got God on my side!”

And the next moment you’re telling people that your wife is your sister. We—like Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Israel—are so up and down. That’s why we need a God who ISN’T! We need a God who is constant. A God who is the same across all generations.

So don’t be a modern day Marcionite, who subtly falls into the trap of thinking that the God of the OT is not the same as the God of the NT, or that God somehow changes. He doesn’t. He can’t. He’s God. Bank on that.