

Sent: Wednesday, March 01, 2017 3:07 PM
Subject: Last Nite's Study on the Faith of Isaac and Jacob!

"By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau, even regarding things to come! By faith Jacob, as he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, and worshipped, leaning on the top of his staff!" (Hebrews 11:20-21)

Last nite's lesson revolved around the word "blessing"--and "family feuds"! In the case of Jacob and Esau, the "battle for the blessing"--delivered by the father (Isaac), believing in the continuation of God's covenant! And later, Jacob blessing the sons of Joseph, the younger one (again!) chosen, by faith, over the older one, by God's leading, contrary to the custom of the day!

It's all about "things to come"! The birth of a nation! God building a people for Himself! Families! And preparations for the coming of a Redeemer! And reconciliation between man and God! And families!

And so, in the midst of schemes and deceptions and maneuverings of "fallen" men (and women!) --imperfect people, who also happen to be God's chosen! --God, in His Sovereignty, moves forward in His plan and purpose for all mankind!

We pick up the story in Genesis 24, after the miraculous birth of Isaac and God's call for Abraham to offer him up as a sacrifice! Then seeing Abraham's growing in faith, and Isaac surviving, and God's promises--and the covenant promises--alive and well! And we also see Isaac as a picture of the coming Savior!

And now Abraham's "big concern" for Isaac's future--and coming descendants--through whom God promised to "bless" all the families of the earth! Abraham is old, and "the Lord has blessed him in every way"! (Gen. 24:1) But father Abraham is concerned that his son Isaac might "take a wife from the daughters of the Canaanites," and thus sends his trusted servant, Eliezer, back to the place of his birth, in Mesopotamia, and family in the line of Seth, to find a bride for Isaac! And God "blesses" Isaac with "beautiful" Rebekah! What a great love story!

But the marriage between Isaac and Rebekah is not without problems! She remains barren (like Sarah) for many years! And so, Isaac "prayed to the Lord on behalf of his wife"--and she ends up having twins, who also "struggle in her womb"--and God revealing to her that the "older would serve the younger"! But Isaac ends up "loving" Esau (the oldest, a "man's man!") and Rebekah "loves" Jacob! And there's favoritism, and division, and conflict in the home!

And so, when Isaac is old and "his eyes dim," he "secretly" plans to "bless" Esau over Jacob! And when Rebekah learns of his plan, she conspires with Jacob to impersonate Esau and gain the blessing! And it works! Isaac receives the lavish blessing God had given Abraham, passed on to Isaac, and now to Jacob! It happens to be God's plan as well--but probably not done in His way! And the result is a "family feud," with Esau planning to kill Jacob after Isaac passes!

Well there's so much more to this family drama! But God is in control! Isaac, being the father of faith, eventually sees the light, and reaffirms the blessing on Jacob (Gen. 28)! And the first

concern he has is about who Jacob would marry! He instructs him "not to take a wife from the daughters of Canaan," but to return to Mesopotamia, and marry a daughter of Laban, his mother's brother!

And so, Jacob heads to Haran, but, while asleep at Bethel, has a dream from God, of "angels ascending and descending from heaven," and of the Lord appearing and reaffirming His covenant--and assuring him that "He would be with him and keep him wherever he will go"! And then, later, he just happens to run into Rachel as he arrives in Haran--and it's love at first sight! But Laban, Rachel's father, requires him to work seven years for her--and "it seemed to him but a few days because of his love for her"! (Gen. 29:20) But then, in another family trick, he "wakes up with" Rachel's older sister, Leah! And he has to work another seven years for Rachel!

The family drama continues! There's conflict, as might be expected, between Isaac and Laban and when he and his growing family secretly leave--to return to the land of Canaan--he's pursued by Laban and there's dispute over what belongs to whom, and after that's resolved he must face Esau and his band of 400 men! And he's fearful! But he's confronted with "an angel of the Lord"--believed to be the pre-incarnate Christ--with whom he "wrestles"! (Gen. 32) And after prevailing, his name is changed to "Israel"! And he is again "blessed" by God--and now ready to make peace with Esau! And eventually becomes father to 12 sons (and also a daughter, Dinah, but that's another "stain-filled family story," which you can read all about in Gen. 34) --and thus the "twelve tribes of Israel"! This is all part of the sovereign plan of God! And it's "all in the family"!

Well, what about Esau, whom Isaac had also "blessed" (but not in the same "covenant" way!)? Esau ended up marrying Judith, daughter of Beeri, the Hittite, and Basemath, the daughter of Elon the Hittite--and "they brought grief to Isaac and Rebekah"! (Gen. 26:34) In Gen. 27:46, Rebekah said to Isaac, "I am tired of living because of the daughters of Heth..." And so, it wasn't surprising that Esau had earlier "sold his birthright"--and his and his descendant's future--for a pot of porridge! And thus "sacrificing the eternal on the altar of the immediate"! In Gen. 28:6-6, we see Esau "seeing Jacob blessed and obeying his father in not taking a wife from the daughters of Canaan! And he "saw" how his wives displeased his father Isaac! And then he only added to his woes by marrying the "daughter of Ishmael"! O the woes, and consequences, of not receiving a father's blessing--and the intense need of a son to somehow please his father!

Well, there's lots more to the story of Jacob and his family! Including the tragic story of the loss of Joseph, his favorite son--finally born to his once barren Rachel (like Sarah and Rebekah!). And again, we see how favoritism in the family causes conflict and leads to bitterness and every form of evil! In Joseph's case, the plot by his brothers to put "this dreamer" to death--but, as part of God's sovereign plan, through Judah's intervention, to have him sold into slavery into Egypt! Only, through God's providence, to rise in influence and power--and carry on God's plan for the "children of Israel"! But more on all this next week, when we talk about the faith of Joseph!

With the "loss" of Joseph--and other struggles and setbacks in his life--Jacob's life could very well have ended in total anguish, "dwelling on the despair of unfulfilled dreams." But his faith

held firm, and "his spirit was revived" when, in old age, he learned that Joseph was still alive" (Gen. 45:27). And Genesis 46 tells how he "set out for Egypt with all that he had..." offered sacrifices to God," and heard God again reaffirm His covenant blessing! And, in great pageantry, he was reunited with his beloved son Joseph and gave blessings to him and his two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh (in that order, the younger over the older!)-and lived the rest of his life "in the land of Goshen," in the "best of the land," with all its abundance!

And, at the end of his life, he also summoned his sons--all twelve of them--and told "what would befall them in the days to come!" And, according to Gen. 49:28, he "blessed" them, "everyone with the "blessing" appropriate to him"! He also charged them to "carry his bones" back to be buried in the "field of Machpelah," in the "promised land"--the land of Canaan, with Abraham and Sarah, and Isaac and Rebekah, and his wife Leah (not Rachel!). And thus, the passing of one of the great "fathers of the faith"! But the continuance of God's eternal plan!

Well, what can we learn from this lesson?

The lessons are endless! Most basic of all, we can be assured that our God is the same God as the God of the patriarchs--and that He is still working out His plan and purpose in our world today! God still reigns! And He has a plan and purpose that He is still working out in us, and in our families--and in our world!

And, we can certainly see the significance and importance of a father's faith and of his acknowledgement, and affirmation--and blessing--on his children (boys and girls alike!). And the great influence that a father's life and example can have on "those who come behind"! May we be those kinds of fathers! The role of the patriarchs lives on through us!

And, finally, the question: are we going to live our lives "dwelling in the despair of unfulfilled dreams"--or with confidence in the hope that God's promises will be fulfilled?

May God "bless" your week!

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