

Sunday, June 11, 2023 pm

JOURNEY THROUGH THE BIBLE (15)

Isaac – Genesis 25:19

Tonight, we continue our “journey through the Bible”, a survey of the 17 periods of Bible history. We are currently examining the 4th period, the patriarchs (Genesis 12-50). We have devoted a few lessons to the life of Abraham. Today we want to notice Isaac, Abraham’s promised son.

I. Background

- a. Isaac is a transitional character. Most of what we read about him is related to Abraham and Jacob, but there are a few passages associated primarily with him.
- b. He is the child of promise born to Abraham at 100 and Sarah at 90 (Genesis 21).
- c. His life is recorded in Genesis 21 – his birth to Genesis 35:27-29 – his death.
- d. Isaac is an obedient follower of YHWH, who doesn’t leave the land of Canaan. He has a great faith and worships God. He lives to 180 years of age.
- e. His character is passive, as seen in various events throughout his life. But he was also successful, being blessed by God with great possessions (including Abraham’s inheritance).
- f. The promise made to Abraham (Genesis 12:1-7), is repeated to him in Genesis 26:3-5.
- g. Isaac is mentioned by name 20x in the New Testament.
 - i. Concerning his lineage – Matthew 1:2 (2x), Luke 3:34, Acts 7:8
 - ii. As one of the 3 patriarchs – Matthew 8:11, 22:32, Mark 12:26, Luke 13:28, 20:37, Acts 3:13, 7:32 - “I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob”
 - iii. The promised seed – Romans 9:7, 10, Galatians 4:28 – a child of promise
 - iv. Abraham was willing to sacrifice him at YHWH’s instructions – Hebrews 11:17-18, James 2:21
 - v. A character of faith – Hebrews 11:9, 20 – He blessed Jacob and Esau

II. Isaac’s life

- a. Associated with the life of Abraham and Sarah – he is born (Genesis 21), willingly offered by Abraham (Genesis 22).
- b. Rebekah - Genesis 24 – after Sarah dies (at 127 years of age), meaning that Isaac was 37 years old. 2-3 years later, Abraham sends his trusted servant to Nahor in Mesopotamia, where Laban (Abraham’s brother’s grandson) lived. He was sent there to find a wife for Isaac who was 40 years old (Gen. 25:20). Abraham did not want Isaac to marry a Canaanite (showing his concerns with idolatry, etc.- 24:2-3). The servant goes and finds Rebekah (Laban’s brother – Gen. 24:29). She comes back with him and marries Isaac.
- c. Rebekah was barren, so Isaac pleaded with the LORD and she conceived (25:20-21). Rebekah conceives and will give birth to Esau and Jacob (twins). 25:26 tells us that Isaac was 60 years old when they were born, so for 20 years of marriage they had no children.
- d. The story of Jacob and Esau being born is extraordinary (Gen. 25:23-27). First, Rebekah was barren. Second, as she conceived twins she felt struggling even within her. She was told that she would have twins, 2 nations, but also that the older would serve the younger (25:23). This was not typical of the times and culture. So we find the hand of God at work in this scenario. Understand the promise and what YHWH has done to ensure people understand this was His will! Of course, they are born. Esau comes out first and is red and hairy and thus named, Esau (meaning hairy). As Jacob is born he takes hold of Esau’s heel and is named Jacob (supplanter).
- e. We read that as the boys grow, Esau becomes a skillful hunter but Jacob was a mild man (note: This does not say lazy, cowardice, etc.). Mildness is just one’s manner. Jacob could have been at home working the flock. BUT, Jacob was also deceitful and Esau was rash.

- f. Gen. 25:29-34 records Esau selling his birthright for a bowl of stew and bread. In so doing, he showed a flippant attitude toward important things. He was impulsive also (what is the likelihood was really going to die if he didn't eat at that moment). Esau is mentioned 3 times in the NT (Romans 9:13 – Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated (think last Sunday in cost of being a disciple); Hebrews 11:20 – Isaac's faith; and **Hebrews 12:16** where he is described as a profane person who sold his birthright for a morsel of food).
- g. Genesis 26 records an interaction between Isaac and Abimelech (recall the deception of Abraham to Abimelech in Genesis 20:1-18). There is famine in the land of Canaan. The LORD appears to Isaac and tells him to stay in the land and he will be taken care of. He is reminded of the promise made to Abraham (26:2-6). So Isaac dwells in Gerar (the land of the Philistines). Because of the beauty of Rebekah, Jacob deceived the people saying she was his sister (actually a relative). Like father, like son! After awhile, Abimelech sees Jacob treating Rebekah as a wife and challenges him. When Jacob confesses, Abimelech gives a command to leave them alone and not touch her.
- h. Isaac remains in the land and is very successful (reaping 100 fold – 26:12). He is so prosperous the Philistines become envious and cause troubles. They stop up his wells (no water – no flocks). Abimelech sends Isaac away. Isaac leaves PEACEFULLY. We read of more similar conflicts, so Isaac keeps leaving. He finally comes to Beersheba where they find water. AGAIN, the LORD appears to Isaac and repeats the promise (26:24). NOTICE that Isaac builds an altar there and “called on the name of the LORD”. Also, Abimelech comes with a delegation seeking peace and a covenant because he knows how the LORD was with Isaac (26:26-31).
- i. Gen. 26:34-35 records Esau taking wives of the Canaanites and that they were a grief to Isaac and Rebekah. (Cf. 2 Corinthians 6:14)
- j. Gen. 27 records the deceit of Jacob and Rebekah which results in Isaac blessing him above Esau. Recall: 1) Esau had sold his birthright (which was at least related to this blessing); 2) Before they were born the LORD had said the older (Esau) would serve the younger (Jacob) – Gen. 25:23. The chapter records how Jacob, being older decides to bless Esau and asks him to go hunt game to feed him. Meanwhile, Rebekah hears this and prepares Jacob to deceitfully feed Isaac and pretend he was Esau. After eating, Isaac gives to Jacob the blessing of the firstborn. When he leaves, Esau returns with food, but it is too late. Isaac does NOT recant his blessing of Jacob. Consider now, Hebrews 11:20. He knows what he has done and accepts it. But he does give Esau a lesser blessing and declares that he would serve his brother (Gen. 27:38-40).
- k. 27:41ff - Esau is bitter and hated Jacob resolving that after his father died, he would kill his brother Jacob. As a result, Rebekah convinces Isaac to send Jacob away to where Laban was. He goes and for 20 years, he remains with Laban, where he will establish his family. More on that in our next lesson in this study.
- l. That is all we read about Isaac until his death in Gen. 35:27-29, where Isaac is 180 years old and dies. He is buried by his sons who have reconciled. He was “gathered to his people.” Genesis 49:29-31 tells us he was buried with his wife at the Cave of Machpelah.

III. **Lessons to consider**

- a. Children learn from their parents. We certainly know that parents have the responsibility of raising their children – Proverbs 22:6, “Train up a child in the way he should go...”. Ephesians 6:4 gives the responsibility first to fathers. Psalm 127:3-5, *Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord, The fruit of the womb is a reward. Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, So are the children of one's youth. Happy is the man who has his quiver full of them; They shall not be ashamed, But shall speak with their enemies in the gate.* What are you aiming at? We can discuss proper teaching of children by their parents all day long BUT understand that your example is your biggest and most powerful too. Isaac showed favoritism toward his son, and so did Rebekah (Gen. 25:28). As we study the life of Jacob, we will see that in the way he treats his wives (Rachel and Leah).

- b. The dangers of favoritism – we have established that God shows no partiality – Acts 10:34-35; Romans 2:11. James 2:1-9 is clear that it can be a sin. We need to learn from Him. How much did favoritism factor into the animosity between Esau and Jacob? Colossians 3:21 warns fathers, *Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged*. Favoritism can become a source of frustration when parents show clear partiality toward one child over another. Note: Each child is different and requires individual attention, but here we are talking about unnecessary favoritism.
- c. God deals with imperfect people – we find Isaac, like Abraham deceives his neighbors by lying about his wife. Consider also what we just addressed. The Bible, especially Genesis, does not hide the flaws and imperfections of people, even His most faithful servants. That ought to give us hope – Romans 3:23 says that we have all sinned. Romans 5:8, as sinners Christ died for us.
- d. Recorded wrongs does not imply approval. When we look at the deceit of Jacob, we wonder why Isaac approved of it. There is nothing to indicate Jacob approved. IN fact, he was trembling when he heard he had been deceived. The consequences were done and he might have realized that what happened was God’s will, BUT that does not mean the method was approved of. There are many examples of this in scripture: Rahab lied to hide the spies – that does not imply God’s approval of lying “if it is for a good cause”. A lie is a lie and must be repented of! Ephesians 4:25, Revelation 21:8, etc.
- e. There are consequences to actions – think of Esau’s profane attitude – it cost him his birthright and blessing. Consider – yes it was purposed by God, but Esau was complicit by his actions. He CHOSE to act impulsively (more than once I might add – remember he married Canaanites). Was God’s declaration to Rebekah as she was pregnant a prophecy of His will, OR of Esau’s character OR was it both? Isaac’s favoritism – did it contribute to the rift between Jacob and Esau. NOTE: We will see that favoritism continued with Jacob, not only toward his wives but his children as well. Jacob’s deceit – he was NOT innocent, and as a result of his behavior, he had to leave. AND it became part of his character after he left.
- f. Be careful who you marry – Abraham was VERY concerned about who Isaac should marry. He did NOT want him marrying a Canaanite (with its idolatry). We know the examples in scripture – Solomon and his many adulterous wives, Ahab married Jezebel, Esau married Canaanites and they were a grief to Isaac and Rebekah. Again 2 Corinthians 6:14 – while not a prohibition against marrying an unbeliever, it IS a warning! If you marry an unbeliever, you will have problems with your spiritual father in law!!!! 1 Peter 3:7 tells a husband that he and his wife are to be “heirs together of the grace of life.” Proverbs 18:22, “*He who finds a wife, finds a good thing.*” Proverbs 19:14, *Houses and riches are an inheritance from fathers, But a prudent wife is from the Lord.*
- g. You can choose to be a peacemaker – as you study the life of Isaac, he did not go looking for trouble. When needed he was willing to yield and move, even though he was not in the wrong. Peace is something we ought to value. Matthew 5:9, “*Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.*” Hebrews 12:14, we are to *pursue peace with all, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord.* Romans 12:18, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men!
- h. The importance of trusting and submitting to God’s will – while not manifested to the degree of Abraham, Isaac was a man of great faith. He trusted God and was able to go to God. He did not leave Canaan when told not to. And ultimately, when blessing Jacob, he did not waver in that blessing though it was given in deceit (Jacob even called himself Esau). It is likely that he knew what happened was God’s will and he accepted it. Recall Hebrews 11:20, “*By faith, Isaac blessed Jacob...*” Proverbs 3:5-6 says, *Trust in the Lord with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths.*

And thus, we are briefly introduced to Isaac. While he is a “transitional figure”, he was part of God’s plan and in our journey through the Bible, we dare not exclude him. What have you learned from Isaac?