

God at Work in a New Generation
Genesis 26
June 23, 2021

Summary of the previous study (Gen. 25:12-34):

- Toledot – “these are the generations of” or “this is what happened to.”
- In the first part of the passage we were shown a contrast between the son of the flesh, Ishmael, and the son of the promise, Isaac.
- The passage displayed the fruitfulness of the son of the flesh who fathered 12 sons in comparison to the barrenness experienced by the son of the promise. A barrenness that Isaac prayed for 20 years and that God put an end to in granting Isaac’s prayer with the conception of Jacob and Esau.
- Before their birth we read of the great struggle within Rebekah’s womb and the LORD’s indication that there were two nations contending within her and that the older would serve the younger.
- At the end of the passage we saw the favoritism of each parent and then the passage ends when Jacob takes advantage of Esau’s hunger and Esau trades his birthright for a bowl of lentil soup.

I. Repeated Sins and the Reiteration of God’s Promises (1-10)

Because famine has played a role in the experience of his father, we’re told that this famine was a different famine than the famine in the days of Abraham. Two parallels:

1. Famine (Gen. 12).
2. Sojourning in Gerar and encountering an Abimelech.

Yahweh makes one of His two appearances to Isaac.

Note God’s words in verse 2-5, what words/phrases stand out to you in these verses and why? What is significant about these words/phrases in the context of the narrative? How might these words have been significant to the first hearers of Genesis? How might these words be significant to us?

Isaac obeys God and settles in Gerar but repeats the sin of his father by telling the Philistines that Rebekah is his sister because of his fear of being killed on account of Rebekah’s beauty.

We don't know the exact length of time that Isaac and Rebekah dwelled in Gerar, but the ruse continues until Abimelech sees Isaac laughing with Rebekah.

God uses providential means to cause the truth to come to light.

Abimelech rebukes Isaac for his behavior and ironically, we see the Philistine king acting more righteously than Isaac, the man blessed by God.

What are Isaac's sins that are exposed in verses 7-11? How is this episode in Isaac's life a warning to us?

II. The Gracious Results of God's Promises (12-33)

Immediately after the exposure of Isaac's sin we might be astonished at what we read in verses 12-14 where we see the first gracious result of God's promises, blessing.

a. Blessing (12-14)

Instead of doing away with Isaac because of his sin, God instead fulfills His promise to bless Isaac by granting him material blessings. Gen. 25:5.

b. Rejection and Conflict (15-21)

The importance of water and the difficulties in obtaining it are seen in this section of our passage. Access to water was a key determinant in being able to increase and maintain one's wealth because of its connection to keeping livestock and growing crops.

Rejection by and conflict with the world are gracious results of God's promises because these clearly show the divide between the people of God from the rest of the world. Abraham faced opposition from the people outside of the covenant and Isaac experiences opposition here.

We as Christians know this divide. Matt. 5:11-12, 2 Tim. 3:10-13.

c. Provision and Worship (22-25)

Isaac acknowledges God's provision by declaring that the LORD has made room for him and his family. Deut. 8:17-18.

And Isaac shows that the appropriate response to God's provision and the revelation of His faithfulness to Isaac is worship. Isaac is enabled to worship God because he has been brought into relationship with God by God.

d. The Ability to Forgive and Make Peace (26-33)

This section of our passage showed Isaac's ability to forgive and make peace with those who were in conflict with him.

In verse 28 Abimelech, Ahuzzath, and Phicol said to Isaac, "We see plainly that the LORD has been with you." Should unbelievers be able to say something similar about our lives? If so, why and if not, why not?

III. The Painful Results of Worldliness (34-35)

Esau, at precisely the same age that his father married Rebekah:

- Enters into a marriage covenant with women outside of the covenant of God.
- Acts contrary to his grandfather's (Abraham) efforts and exercised faith in seeking a non-Canaanite woman to marry his father (Isaac). 2 Cor. 6:14.
- Reminds us of Dale Ralph Davis' quote (Faith of Our Fathers: Expositions of Genesis 12-25, 152): "Marriage matters. The wrong kind can sabotage covenant faithfulness for years to come." Jam. 4:4.
- Disregarded his birthright and now disregards God's covenant by marrying these Canaanite women. This should remind us of what we read in Rom. 9:10-13, 18.

Application

- We should praise God for His faithfulness to us despite our sin and because of Christ's sinlessness.
- We should seek to root out unbelief in our hearts by renewing our minds with the truths of God's Word.
- We should praise God for the gracious results of His promises that are ours in Christ.
- We should beware of the temptation to love the world and instead set our hearts on increasing our love for God. 1 Jo. 2:15-17.