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### Studies in Genesis - 24

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# Studies in Genesis

(Leaflet 24)

ISAAC—THE HEIR

ESAU—JACOB—AND THE BIRTHRIGHT

Genesis 25:1—26:35

Our lesson today, covering Genesis twenty-five and twenty-six, sets forth some important events in the lives of a number of people, but chiefly concerning Isaac and his two sons, Jacob and Esau. Following the record of the marriage of Abraham and Keturah and the names of their sons, we read that "Abraham gave all that he had unto Isaac." To this son of promise and heir were given all of his father's earthly possessions; to him the Abrahamic covenant was confirmed; and to him God's promised blessing was added. All this is set forth in these two chapters. And woven into the story we find the record of the death of Abraham, of the descendants of Ishmael, of the birth of Esau and Jacob, and of the latter's purchase of his brother's birthright.

We might take the life of Isaac alone, following his history to the close of his earthly experiences; but it is so intimately related to the events in the lives of his two sons that it is difficult to treat the different personalities separately. Moreover, in so doing, we should miss the sequence of events as set forth in the inspired record; and this we do not want to do. The lives of Jacob and Joseph are linked together in like manner; and we plan to consider them, too, just in the order of their presentation in the chapters that follow.

ISAAC—THE SON AND HEIR—BLESSED OF GOD

Among the "sons of the concubines, which Abraham had" (25:6) were the six sons of Keturah, named in the

opening verses of chapter twenty-five. They and their descendants, as well as Ishmael and his children, were sent "away from Isaac . . . unto the east country" (25:6); this was Abraham's way of separating Isaac, his son of promise and his heir, from his other children. To the sons of his concubines "Abraham gave gifts"; but to Isaac he gave "all that he had" (25:5, 6).

I Chron. 1:32 tells us that Keturah was one of Abraham's concubines; and we know that Hagar was another. Some Bible students believe that he may have taken Keturah to be his concubine even before the death of Sarah; we do not know. It is interesting to note, in passing, that Midian was one of her sons; and through him Jethro came, whom we remember as the father-in-law of Moses. From Abraham the Midianites doubtless heard of the true and living God, and that accounts for the fact that Jethro was "the priest of Midian" (Exod. 18:1).

A map of early Bible times will indicate the general location of some of these sons by their names and tribes and nations; as, for example, Sheba, from whom was descended the queen of Sheba, who went to see Solomon in all his glory.

In our former lessons we have seen that Isaac is a type of Christ. As the long promised son, the "only begotten son" of Sarah and Abraham, he is a foreshadowing of the long promised, "only begotten Son" of God. As Isaac's birth was a miracle—for he was born when Sarah was ninety and Abraham one-hundred years of age—in that, too, he was a faint picture of the miraculously born Son of God, who had no earthly father, but was born of the Virgin Mary. As the beloved son upon the altar, Isaac portrayed the well beloved Son of the Father, the Lord Jesus, the Lamb of God, "obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Phil. 2:8). As the bridegroom, going out to meet his bride, Isaac was a type of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is now calling out His bride, the church, through the Holy Spirit of God, and who will one day come to take her home to heaven. And now in our lesson for today we see that, as the heir of all his



father possessed, Isaac was a type of our Lord Jesus, whom the Father "hath appointed heir of all things" (Heb. 1:2).

Christ is the Creator; and for Him were all things made (Heb. 2:10). Unto the Son of God the Father said, "Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thy hands" (Heb. 1:8, 10). "By him were all things created . . ." (Col. 1:16). "All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made. . . . He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not" (John 1:3, 10).

"But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name" (John 1:12). "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. . . . And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ" (Rom. 8:14, 17).

These are wonderful passages of Scripture; and there are many more like them. They tell us that, because we have been "accepted in the beloved" Son of God (Eph. 1:6), we are "joint-heirs with Christ," who is "the heir of all things." This is our eternal heritage in Him!

Not only did Isaac receive all his father's earthly inheritance; but he was also blessed of God.

"And it came to pass after the death of Abraham, that God blessed his son Isaac; and Isaac dwelt by the well Lahai-roi" (25:11).

It was by this well, whose name means, "In full view of the Living One," that Isaac had met Rebekah—a wonderful picture of the joy of the Lord which we shall share throughout eternity, because we are members of His bride!

Isaac met with trials. He fell into the sin which his father had committed. But he seems never to have been disturbed about his inheritance. He was conscious of the fact that all blessings bound up with the promises of God were his. When the Philistines claimed the wells that he dug, he moved on to other places. When they filled up the wells his father had

dug, he dug them again. But never did he quarrel with the enemy. He was the son and heir of Abraham; and he believed in the God of his father!

Little is written of Isaac, less than of any of the other patriarchs; yet he lived longer than any of the others. He is the only one who never left the land of Canaan—he evidently had intended to go down to Egypt, but the Lord met him and told him not to go (26:2). Isaac was a timid, patient, gentle man, not given to strife and quarrelling. His life was largely uneventful; yet how full and rich, with all the blessings of God! He was his father's heir, and heir of the salvation that only Abraham's God can give!

### THE DEATH AND BURIAL OF ABRAHAM

Abraham lived to be one-hundred and seventy-five years of age (25:7), having lived thirty-eight years after Sarah died.

*"Then Abraham gave up the ghost, and died in a good old age, an old man, and full of years; and was gathered to his people" (25:8).*

The words "of years" in this verse, quoted from the King James Version, are printed in italics, which means that they were not in the original Hebrew text, but were added by the translators. If we read the passage literally, we have something like this: "Abraham died in a good old age, an old man in fulness." And surely his had been a life of fulness! He was seventy-five when he went to the land of Canaan; therefore, he had walked with God in the Promised Land for one-hundred years. What a long walk with God! And doubtless Abraham had a better time, walking with God, as the years passed. That is the way the Christian life should be. Abraham made mistakes; he sinned; but he kept on walking with God until he "was gathered unto his fathers."

*"And his sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah . . ." (25:9, 10).*

If any ill feelings had continued through the years between these half-brothers, they put them aside as they buried their father in the place where Sarah had been buried thirty-eight years previously.



Abraham died and was buried; but still he lived on as one of God's redeemed children; for some two thousand years later his Lord and Master, the One whose day the patriarch saw by faith "and was glad," said concerning the life to come:

"As touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living" (Matt. 22:31, 32).

"And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 8:11).

About four thousand years ago "the God of glory" called Abram out of idolatry in his Chaldean home, unto the Land of Promise. For many years the patriarch walked with God by faith; for ever and ever he will live in that "better country" toward which he set his face when he was "not disobedient unto the heavenly vision" (cf. Acts 26:19).

With the life of Abraham we associate the words of Habakkuk 2:4, quoted by the Holy Spirit in Rom. 1:17; Gal. 3:11; Heb. 10:38: "The just shall live by faith." H. W. Taylor has suggested the following application of this text to the life of the Christian; may the Lord Jesus, even the God of Abraham, help us to let Him make it real in our own pilgrim walk:

*Justification*—"The just shall live by faith" (Rom. 1:17).

*Grace*—"The just shall live by *faith*" (Gal. 3:11).

*Christian Experience*—"The just shall *live* by faith" (Heb. 10:32).

"The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day" (Prov. 4:18).

## THE SONS OF ISHMAEL

In our earlier study of Hagar and Ishmael we called attention to the record of Gen. 25:12-18, which tells of the sons of Ishmael. There were twelve of them, according to God's promise to Abraham when he had prayed to God, saying, "O that Ishmael might live before thee!" (Gen. 17:18, 20). That God abundantly fulfilled His promise of blessing upon this son of Abraham and Hagar, is seen in the words of Gen. 25:16:

"These are the sons of Ishmael, and these are their names, by their towns, and by their castles; twelve princes according to their nations."

In verses 17, 18 we read of the death of Ishmael and of that part of the East where his descendants settled:

"And these are the years of the life of Ishmael, an hundred and thirty and seven years: and he gave up the ghost and died; and was gathered unto his people. And they dwelt from Havilah unto Shur, that is before Egypt, as thou goest toward Assyria: and he died in the presence of all his brethren."

## ESAU AND JACOB—THE SONS OF ISAAC AND REBEKAH

Following the record of the death of Ishmael, we take up the story of Isaac once more, and read of the birth of his two sons, Esau and Jacob.

1. *Born in Answer to Prayer.* For twenty years Isaac and Rebekah had no children; for "Isaac was forty years old when he took Rebekah to wife" (25:20), and he was "three-score years old when she bare" Esau and Jacob (25:26). It must have been a severe trial of faith for Isaac and Rebekah to have to wait so long for the promised heir to the covenant-blessings. They knew that through Isaac the nation God promised to Abraham would be established; and through that nation the Saviour. Yet we read of no schemes or human devices on their part, such as Abraham and Sarah had planned when Ishmael was born. Perhaps Isaac had profited from the lessons his father taught him.



Perhaps his quiet patience was bearing fruit in this time of testing. Certainly God was teaching him trustful obedience and faith. And the twin boys, Esau and Jacob, were born in direct answer to prayer, even as we read in 25:21:

"And Isaac intreated the Lord for his wife, because she was barren: and the Lord was intreated of him, and Rebekah his wife conceived."

Some time later Rebekah also "went to enquire of the Lord," whereupon God foretold that, from the twin sons who were to be born, there would come "two nations . . . two manner of people." Then the Lord added, "And the one people shall be stronger than the other people; and the elder shall serve the younger" (25:22, 23).

2. "*The Elder Shall Serve the Younger.*" These words, spoken by the Lord to Rebekah before the children were born (25:23), teach us something of the sovereignty of God in working out His eternal purpose. In fact, this very story concerning Esau and Jacob is used by the Holy Spirit, in Rom. 9:10-13, to illustrate God's sovereign will "according to election." Some Bible students call this predestination. Let us look for a moment at Rom. 9:11-12:

"... the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth . . . it was said unto her (Rebekah), The elder shall serve the younger."

Now, my friend, that is election for service, not election to salvation. Esau had the same offer of eternal life, by faith in the promised Redeemer, that Jacob had. But God foreknew all things; He knew that Esau would despise his birth-right, with its accompanying blessings. He knew also that Jacob, selfish and self-seeking though he would be, would desire spiritual things, that he would be a man of faith. Therefore, God chose Jacob to be the channel for the coming Saviour of men. Certainly God foreknows all things, even as the Holy Spirit said in I Peter 1:2, addressing Christians as the "... elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ . . ."



Paul also said, in Rom. 8:29, "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son . . ."

God did not say that Esau could not be saved; He said, rather, that "the elder should serve the younger." That is election to service. There is nothing in the Scriptures to prove that Esau ever did put his faith in the coming Redeemer. Certainly the inference is that he did not, for he despised spiritual things. However, if he believed in the God of his fathers, his soul was saved. And, in any case, our sovereign God has every right to choose whom He will to do His service.

God can call any man to preach the Gospel, by His own sovereign grace. No man has in himself the gifts that fit him for the ministry, either at home or in the foreign field. No man can make himself a Bible teacher or minister. The gifts for such a calling must come from God. The Holy Spirit, working through the church, is supreme; and He chooses whom He will. Likewise, God chose Jacob in preference to Esau before these two were born; for He knew the course each would take.

But some will ask the meaning of Rom. 9:13, which reads as follows, "As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated." There is no difficulty at all in this passage, if we remember that it is a quotation from Malachi 1:2, 3; and Malachi wrote these searching words, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, some fourteen hundred years after God had said to Rebekah, "The elder shall serve the younger." Esau and Jacob had lived and died centuries before Malachi was born. Indeed, as the prophet Malachi looked back upon Israel's history, he saw the wickedness of the Edomites, descendants of Esau, "the people against whom the Lord hath indignation for ever" (Mal. 1:4). He saw how these children of Esau fought against Israel, God's chosen people. He saw that they followed in the steps of their father, Esau, who was called Edom; and he deliberately turned his back upon the blessings of the God of his father, Isaac, and of his grandfather, Abraham. That is why God wrote, through Malachi, saying, "I loved Jacob, and I hated Esau" (Mal.

1:2, 3). God hated Esau's wicked ways. That is why Paul used this illustration in Rom. 9:10-14, to prove that God has every sovereign right to do according to His all-wise will in selecting men to perform His service. Moreover, Paul was very careful to add these significant words:

"What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid" (Rom. 9:14).

And in the verses which follow this statement he gave us one of the strongest passages in all the Scriptures concerning the sovereignty of God.

Nowhere in this Book is it written that any soul is chosen to be lost! Let us ever remember that. A man is lost only because he refuses to heed God's loving "Whosoever will." And if any minister teaches that a man must wait till he dies to find out whether he is lost or saved, then the responsibility is on the minister. What has God predestined? He has predestined believers to eternal life, because He foreknows that they will receive the Lord Jesus Christ as the only Saviour of sinners. And if you are lost, my friend in radioland, you can not blame God. "The Lord . . . is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (II Peter 3:9).

God gave His only begotten Son to die, that none need be lost. He has no pleasure in seeing never-dying souls go out into eternity unsaved. He has done everything to redeem fallen humanity. He sent His beloved Son from His bosom, sent Him to earth to be spat upon, to be falsely accused, to be a curse for us, to be crucified on the cross, that a fountain of cleansing might be opened for a guilty world. God did that. He took the Lord Jesus from His own heart, and saw Him nailed to the cross. He saw the holy Son of God become black with our sins, till He turned His face away—all this He did to save men from hell. No one can ever say that such a God has predestined a single soul to eternal torment. No, my unsaved friend; our God of love speaks plainly, saying, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). Behold Him, and be born again—saved for all the endless ages.



## JACOB—ESAU—AND THE BIRTHRIGHT

### 1. *Esau—A Man of the World; Jacob—A Quiet Pilgrim.*

"And the boys grew: and Esau was a cunning hunter, a man of the field; and Jacob was a plain man, dwelling in tents" (25:27).

Esau represents the man of the world. He was a restless, cunning hunter," a "man of the field." Jacob represents the quiet pilgrim, not perfect by any means, not always lovable, yet a man of faith. In the verse we have just quoted, the word "plain" means "quiet"; and Jacob's "dwelling in tents" signifies his pilgrim walk. This reminds us of what God said in Heb. 11:9, 10 about Abraham's pilgrim character, as well as that of Isaac and Jacob:

"By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles (i. e., 'tents') with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: for he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God."

Esau doubtless could command his servants to bring to him his horses, his dogs, and his bugle. He was a typical man of the world, who has little or no time for the things of God. God loves the quiet pilgrim, who finds his satisfaction in things eternal.

2. "*Isaac Loved Esau . . . but Rebekah Loved Jacob*" (25:28). Neither parent was blameless in this manifestation of partiality. When fathers and mothers show favoritism among their children, grief is sure to follow. Moreover, Isaac seems to have been self-willed in going against God's express statement, "The elder shall serve the younger." Surely Rebekah had not failed to tell her husband of this prediction; yet Isaac was determined to bestow the blessing upon Esau, the older son and the natural heir. And although Rebekah acted upon God's prophetic statement, yet she taught her son to steal. How human these parents were! And what an influence parents have upon their children!

Whether Rebekah ever told Esau of God's prophecy that "the elder should serve the younger," we do not know. But

surely she must have taken Jacob at her knee many times, to tell him about God's covenant with Abraham, to tell him something of the priestly power of the head of the family, to point him on to the coming Messiah—to tell him that all this blessing was to come through his family. It was in answer to Rebekah's prayer, before the children were born, that God had told her this; and she must have repeated the story to Jacob, whom she loved.

3. *Esau's Desire to Satisfy the Flesh; Jacob's Love for the Things of God.*

"And Jacob sod pottage: and Esau came from the field, and he was faint: and Esau said to Jacob, Feed me, I pray thee, with that same red pottage; for I am faint: therefore was his name called Edom" (25:29, 30).

Now in verse 25 of this chapter we note that, when Esau was born, he was "red, all over like an hairy garment." Because he was red, he was called "Edom," which means "red." "Therefore was his name called Edom." Look at verse 30 in the King James Version, and you will note that the word "pottage" was not in the original Hebrew text; that is why it was printed in italics. The word "same" is repeated, and ought to be "red." What Esau really said to Jacob was, "Feed the red to the red." It was a pun. The pottage was made of "lentiles" (verse 34); and lentiles are a vegetable belonging to the bean family. Esau looked at the dish of red pottage that he liked. He was hungry; and as a care-free, joking man of the world, he said, "Feed the red to the red."

Now in all probability Esau brought venison back with him from the field. As a son of Isaac, he was wealthy, and had servants who could have prepared food for him. But he liked what Jacob had, and did not want to wait. How like the world, impatient for material blessings!

"And Jacob said, Sell me this day thy birthright. And Esau said, Behold, I am at the point to die: and what profit shall this birthright do to me?" (25:31, 32).

Now it is generally understood that Esau meant, "I am about to starve of hunger," just as people say the same thing



today. They do not mean that actually they are about to die. It is an exaggerated expression understood by all. But this is not what Esau meant when he spoke to Jacob. What he really said was something like this: "I am to die, and what shall the birthright profit me?" In other words, at his death, the blessing would go on to his family. While he was living, he "despised" it. Why should he care whether his family was to be in the line of blessing? "Thus Esau despised his birthright" (25:34). He said to himself, as it were, "What does it matter to me whether or not my sons get the blessing? Let them take care of themselves." He did not prize this valuable heritage! He cared more about satisfying the desires of the flesh. And thus it has always been with the godless world. Yet material things do not satisfy; they are fleeting, not capable of feeding the soul.

"And Jacob said, Sell me this day thy birthright. . . .  
And Jacob said, Swear to me this day; and he sware unto  
him: and he sold his birthright unto Jacob" (25:31, 33).

In this Jacob took advantage of Esau. God had to deal with Jacob a long time before he gave up some of his grasping ways. But this much must be said to Jacob's credit: he wanted what God had to give, and he was willing to surrender fleshly pleasures for things eternal. Perhaps he said to himself, "I will give everything I can to get the birthright. My mother told me that God said I was to have it." He wanted what God had to give.

Beloved, that is the point to remember about Jacob's life, more than any other. That is why he stands out before us on the pages of the Bible. Later on, God changed his name to "Israel," the name given to the nation. Jacob became the father of the twelve tribes of that nation. And it has been said that the names "Jacob" and "Israel" occur more times in the Scriptures than any other name except that of God.

It is true that Jacob wanted to *buy* what God had promised in *grace*. It is true that Jacob had much to learn before he was exemplary in his life. But through it all, he wanted God's blessing. He loved the things of God.

4. *Esau—A "Profane Person"; Jacob—A Man of Faith.*  
This is God's indictment against Esau, as found in Heb. 12:16, 17:

"... lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright. For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears."

This passage does not mean that Esau "found no place of repentance" from sin; we have already discussed that matter. God is eager to save every penitent sinner! But Esau could not alter the fact that his birthright had been deliberately sold; and when he wanted the accompanying blessing anyway, he did not deserve it; nor could he get it.

Again, in this passage the word "profane" does not mean taking the name of the Lord in vain; it means turning one's back upon God's blessing, choosing rather "the pleasures of sin for a season" (cf. Heb. 11:25). My friend, God's blessing is worth more than all the possessions the world has to offer. I have known mighty men in God's service who, in a time of temptation, bartered their power and usefulness for a moment of worldly pleasure. That is what Esau did.

"Thus Esau despised his birthright." And thus Jacob became heir to all the covenant promises of God, spoken to Abraham. Through Jacob all the nations of the earth have been blessed; for from Israel the world got the Bible, and through Israel the Saviour came. Through Israel's Messiah the world will yet see glory and blessing, when the Lord Jesus, "the Lion of the tribe of Judah," returns to rule. All this heritage Esau sold for a dish of pottage! For a moment of pleasure! He did not care for the things of God. Beloved, let us prize, above all else, the deeper things of our Lord and Saviour.

The next reference to Esau in the inspired record tells of how he married two heathen women, daughters of the Hittites, who were the descendants of Canaan, the son of Ham. (See 26:34, 35.) It is a logical sequel to the choice



he had made. Having turned to the godless world for his pleasure, he became so indifferent to the things of his fathers' God that he married, not one pagan, but two heathen women! Little wonder that the Edomites, his children's children, became the bitter enemies of Israel, the chosen people of God. The Christ-rejecting world is always at enmity with those who love the Lord.

### THE ABRAHAMIC COVENANT CONFIRMED TO ISAAC

Chapter twenty-six returns to the story of Isaac, and falls logically into three parts: (1) God's appearance to Isaac to confirm the covenant He had made with Abraham; (2) Isaac's sin in calling Rebekah his sister, the same error into which Abraham had fallen twice; and (3) Isaac's prosperity as he became a digger of wells, blessed by the Lord who once more appeared unto him to reassure him of His peace and presence and blessing.

It was Dr. William Evans who wrote, saying that God appeared seven times to Abraham for revelation; twice to Isaac for corroboration; and seven times to Jacob for restraint. Both manifestations of Jehovah to Isaac are recorded in the chapter before us.

Because Isaac was the heir to all the covenant-blessings, God appeared to him, in order to confirm that covenant which He had made with Abraham many years previously. Doubtless Isaac's faith was greatly strengthened by this revelation of Jehovah. And unquestionably the heart of God's message to this heir of Abraham was summarized in this:

"In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed" (26:4).

Let us ever remember that the Gospel message is bound up in these words—spoken to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. Surely we need not explain again here that they promised the coming Saviour of the world; for we have tried to keep this fundamental truth before us in all these lessons on the lives of the patriarchs.

Isaac was evidently on his way down to Egypt, about to make the same mistake his father had made, when God

graciously interfered with his plans; for we read in 26:1, 2, 6 these words:

"And there was a famine in the land, beside the first famine that was in the days of Abraham. And Isaac went unto Abimelech king of the Philistines unto Gerar. And the Lord appeared unto him, and said, Go not down into Egypt; dwell in the land which I shall tell thee of . . . And Isaac dwelt in Gerar."

Gerar was on the border between the land of Canaan and Egypt. God let Isaac go that far; then He stopped him. It was when Abraham went down to Egypt, which is a type of the world, that he got into trouble. Isaac, not having profited by his father's mistake, was about to fall into the same sin; for God's best blessing was to be had in the land of promise. That is why the Lord did not permit Isaac to go all the way into Egypt.

How blessed are God's interferences! Sometimes we do not like them; we want our own way; we wonder why God does not permit us to do certain things that we very much desire to do. But how necessary to our own good are His interferences, when we get out of His will for our lives!

The story is told of a little boy who wanted to feed a crumb of his cake to an ant. The frightened little creature turned away from the food, and went in an opposite direction. Again the boy put the crumb before the ant; and again the ant turned away. This continued for some time. Then the child managed to place the crumb in such a position that the ant got a taste of it. That altered the whole situation. The ant ate a bit, then took the remainder off to his hole. But he would never have gotten the crumb if the boy had not interfered with his own plan.

Some day we shall understand why God has often changed our plans for us. From the mountain-top, as it were, we shall look back over all the winding paths by which He has led; and we shall praise Him for His guidance all along the way. That, I think, is why God stopped Isaac, when he was about to make the same mistake his father had made.



And having appeared to Isaac, God confirmed to him the Abrahamic covenant. Let us read on, in verses 3-5:

"Sojourn in this land, and I will be with thee, and will bless thee; for unto thee, and unto thy seed, I will give all these countries, and I will perform the oath which I swore unto Abraham thy father; and I will make thy seed to multiply as the stars of heaven, and will give unto thy seed all these countries; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because that Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws."

From Abraham Isaac had learned that he was "the seed," through whom the covenant blessing would come; but now he heard the promise from God Himself. When he lay bound upon the altar; when he saw the ram offered up in his stead; when he learned these lessons concerning the promised Messiah through his earlier experiences with his father, he trusted in his father's God. But now Jehovah talked with Isaac himself, confirming the covenant, reassuring the son and heir of Abraham, that what God had promised He would fulfill.

#### ISAAC'S SIN AND GOD'S PROTECTION OF ISAAC AND REBEKAH

After all this, after Isaac had been guided and blessed by the Lord, after God had appeared unto him to confirm the covenant, even then Isaac sinned in the same way his father had sinned on two former occasions. He told the men of Gerar that Rebekah was his sister. He was afraid they would kill him for Rebekah's sake, "because she was fair to look upon" (verse 7).

"And it came to pass, when he had been there a long time, that Abimelech king of the Philistines looked out at a window, and saw, and, behold, Isaac was sporting with Rebekah his wife. And Abimelech called Isaac, and said, Behold, of a surety she is thy wife: and how saidst thou, She is my sister? And Isaac said unto him, Because I said, Lest I die for her" (verses 8, 9).

Here again the grace and the goodness of God entered into the picture. Isaac's sin had to be forgiven; and Isaac

and Rebekah had to be protected; for God had a service for them, and He loved them, in spite of their sin. He loves us, my friend, in spite of our sins. "God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8). God overruled in Isaac's case, and caused Abimelech to protect both Isaac and Rebekah.

This must have been a different Abimelech from the one whom Abraham had deceived in the same way; for some ninety years had passed since Abraham had gone down to Gerar, and had said that Sarah was his sister. (See Gen. 20:1-18.) "Abimelech" was evidently an official title, like "Pharaoh," or possibly a family name.

"And Abimelech charged all his people, saying, He that toucheth this man or his wife shall surely be put to death" (verse 11).

Let us remember that Isaac and Rebekah are a type of Christ and the church; and they can never be separated. In the mind and purpose of the eternal God, what He puts together, what stands as a type, can never be interfered with by man. In spite of all the mistakes of members of His church, the bride of Christ will be complete one day; and she will never, never be separated from her Lord and Bridegroom.

#### ISAAC'S GOD-GIVEN PROSPERITY

"Then Isaac sowed in that land, and received in the same year an hundredfold: and the Lord blessed him. And the man waxed great, and went forward, and grew until he became very great: for he had possession of flocks, and possession of herds, and great store of servants: and the Philistines envied him. For all the wells which his father's servants had digged in the days of Abraham his father, the Philistines had stopped them, and filled them with earth. And Abimelech said unto Isaac, Go from us; for thou art much mightier than we" (verses 12-16).

Perhaps this was God's way of getting Isaac to go back toward his own land, for at least he "departed thence, and



pitched his tent in the valley of Gerar, and dwelt there" (verse 17), later going all the way to Beer-sheba (verse 23).

#### ISAAC—"THE MAN OF THE WELL"

We see from the remainder of this twenty-sixth chapter why Isaac has been called "the man of the well." We see also why he is remembered as a peace-loving man. Instead of striving for the wells which the enemy claimed, he went on and dug other wells. A well was very valuable to a man who had large flocks and herds; and it was a mark of ownership. That is why Isaac dug again the wells which his father had dug, but which the enemy had stopped after Abraham's death. "And he called their names after the names by which his father had called them" (verse 18).

From the footnote of the Scofield Reference Bible we learn the meaning of the names of three of these wells which Isaac dug: "Esek" means "contention," because "the herdmen of Gerar did strive with Isaac's herdmen, saying, The water is ours" (verse 20). "And they digged another well, and strove for that also: and he called the name of it Sitnah," which means "hatred." "Rehoboth" was the name of the next well dug by Isaac's herdmen, and it means "enlargement"; for he said, "Now the Lord hath made room for us, and we shall be fruitful in the land" (verses 19-22).

"Esek and Sitnah were Isaac's own attempts at well-digging. Afterward he dwelt by the old wells of his father." (See Scofield note.)

"And he went up from thence to Beer-sheba" (verse 23). At Beer-sheba, which means "The well of the oath," God appeared to Isaac a second time; and after this even his enemies went to him to make peace with this man whom, they acknowledged, God had blessed. (See verses 24-31.)

The words of verse 19 suggest yet another significant truth. There we read that "Isaac's servants digged in the valley, and found there a well of springing water" (or as the margin renders it, "a well of living water"). This takes us on in our thoughts to the New Testament symbolism of

the well of living water. Our Lord, in talking to the woman of Samaria at Jacob's well (John 4:1-45), told her of the living water that He would give her, "a well of water springing up into everlasting life" (John 4:14). That sinful woman was saved, and became a soul-winner. Her heart-thirsty spirit was satisfied by the living water of everlasting life.

Again, on another occasion, the Lord Jesus said plainly that the "rivers of living water" are free to all the world, in the Person of His Holy Spirit (John 7:37-39). And water in the Scriptures is also used as a symbol of the Word of God (Eph. 5:26).

Just as Isaac's flocks and herds had to have water for physical life, so also Isaac's soul had to drink from the living fountain of the water of life, in order to have everlasting life. So must every sinner heed the loving invitation of the God of Isaac, if he would enter into that New Jerusalem, where flows "a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and the Lamb" (Rev. 22:1). And this is His loving invitation:

"Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price" (Isaiah 55:1).

Again we turn to Isaiah 12:3 to find yet other wonderful words:

"Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation."

My friend, just as Isaac dug again the wells his father had dug, but which the enemy had filled up, so also we must go to the Word of God and "dig," as it were, for the precious truths that bring refreshment to the soul. For many years, during the Dark Ages, the church lost sight of some of these truths. Then Martin Luther and other reformers dug again the "wells" which the world had stopped; they presented anew to mankind the truth of justification by faith, by the grace of God alone. Then came the Wesleys, Whitfield,



Darby, Kelly, Moody, and a host of others, uncovering the wonderful teaching about the Person and work of the Holy Spirit; evangelizing, winning souls to the only Saviour of sinners. And not least among these long-forgotten truths is that of the rapture of the church and the second coming of Christ to the earth to reign. Paul taught it. All the apostles taught it. The early Christians believed and taught it. Then the world filled up that "well," so to speak. But godly men dug again the "well" which the Christ-rejecting world had stopped. That is why, all over the world today, hundreds of thousands of God's dear children are looking for the Lord Jesus to come in glory, to bring order out of chaos, to give peace on earth for war and hatred and strife. May God help us to be digging from the living fountain of the Word of God for refreshment of soul, as well as for the message of salvation for a parched and thirsty world.

#### GOD'S SECOND APPEARANCE TO ISAAC

It was "in the same night" after Isaac went to Beer-sheba (verse 23) that the Lord appeared to him a second time, saying,

"I am the God of Abraham thy father: fear not, for I am with thee, and will bless thee, and multiply thy seed for my servant Abraham's sake" (verse 24).

Isaac had refrained from quarrelling with the enemy. He had gone from well to well, living at peace with his fellow-men. And God appeared unto him! His "Fear not, for I am with thee" far more than compensated for any temporal things he had given up. And so it always is with the child of God. The consciousness of His peace and presence and blessing makes His grace sufficient for every trial!

No wonder Isaac at Beer-sheba knew the meaning of the *altar*, the *tent*, and the place of *prayer*. His father, Abraham, had known a similar experience more times than one.

"And he builded an altar there, and called upon the name of the Lord, and pitched his tent there: and there Isaac's servants digged a well" (verse 25).

This should be the experience of every child of God. And if any one of these three—the altar, the tent, and the place of prayer—is missing in the Christian life, then something is wrong. The tent speaks to us of our pilgrim character, reminding us that we “sit very loosely concerning the things of this earth.” The altar—our altar—is the cross of Christ, where “one sacrifice for sin forever” was made at the awful cost of His own precious blood. And prayer is “calling upon the name of the Lord” an experience—vitally necessary to the Christian’s growth “in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ” (II Peter 3:18).

#### ISAAC’S COVENANT WITH ABIMELECH

It was at Beer-sheba, “the well of the oath,” that Abraham had made a covenant with another Abimelech, many years previously, promising that he would not deal falsely with him. (See Gen. 21:22-32.) And it was at Beer-sheba that the Abimelech of Isaac’s day went to the patriarch for a covenant of peace. This king of the Philistines took with him from Gerar one of his friends and the captain of his army, Ahuzzath and Phichol (verse 26). As we saw earlier in this chapter, they had sent Isaac away, because the Philistines envied him of his prosperity and great possessions. Therefore, when they went to Isaac from Gerar, the patriarch asked them, saying:

“Wherefore come ye to me, seeing ye hate me, and have sent me away from you? And they said, We saw certainly that the Lord was with thee: and we said, Let there be now an oath betwixt us, even betwixt us and thee, and let us make a covenant with thee; that thou wilt do us no hurt, as we have not touched thee, and as we have done unto thee nothing but good, and have sent thee away in peace: thou art now the blessed of the Lord. And he made them a feast, and they did eat and drink. And they rose up betimes in the morning, and sware one to another: and Isaac sent them away, and they departed in peace” (verses 27-30).



## ISAAC—A PILGRIM FOR GOD

At Beer-sheba, separated from the Philistines, Isaac lived, a pilgrim for God. There his servants dug another well, and called it "Shebah." "Therefore the name of the city is called Beer-sheba unto this day" (verses 32, 33). But Isaac's troubles were not over. Esau's two heathen wives, to whom we have already referred in this lesson, were "a grief of mind unto Isaac and to Rebekah" (verses 34, 35).

God has not promised freedom from trial and care in this present life; but He has told us to cast every care upon Him, for He careth for His own. (See I Peter 5:7.) Isaac had his trials. One son "despised his birthright"; another stole the blessing. The enemy caused him trouble. He himself sinned, and had to be rebuked—and forgiven. But through every trial, through every heart-ache, he was conscious of his father's blessing. Was he not the heir?

What if Ishmael did mock him in his earlier years? His father sent Ishmael away, at God's command; and Ishmael speaks to us of the flesh, which wars against the spirit. What if Isaac did have to suffer possible agony of soul as he lay bound upon the altar? There he learned the most precious lesson of all his life—that for his sin there was a Substitute to come, even the God and Saviour of all who would believe in the cleansing blood of His cross. As the heir to the covenant blessing, Isaac could look beyond the testings and the tears to that day when, through his family, "all nations of the earth" would "be blessed" in the Christ of the cross and of the empty tomb. And even as Isaac maintained his pilgrim walk with God, "the Lord appeared unto him" twice, to reassure him of His peace and presence and blessing. Isaac's life was rich and full!

Isaac's God is your God, my friend, if you love the Lord Jesus. And like Isaac, you are an heir, yea, more than that; you are an heir of God and a joint-heir with Christ, because you are a member of His bride, the church. Then look beyond the trials and the tears that will surely come. Look up to Him who tells you, even as He told Isaac many centuries ago, "Fear not, for I am with thee, and will bless thee." The

God of Isaac came down to earth to die for us; and before He went to the cross, He spoke those never-to-be-forgotten words which we love; may they be our comfort for today—and till He comes:

“Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid” (John 14:27).



