

ESAU SELLS HIS BIRTHRIGHT TO JACOB

BIBLE TEXT: Genesis 25:27-34; 27:1-40

LESSON 22 Senior Course

MEMORY VERSE: "Speak every man truth with his neighbor: for we are members one of another" (Ephesians 4:20).

BIBLE TEXT in King James Version

Genesis 25:27-34.

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

²⁸ And Isaac loved Esau, because he did eat of *his* venison: but Rebekah loved Jacob.

²⁹ ¶ And Jacob *sod* pottage: and Esau came from the field, and he *was* faint:

³⁰ 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.

³¹ And Jacob said, Sell me this day thy birthright.

³² And Esau said, Behold, I *am* at the point to die: and what profit shall this birthright do to me?

³³ And Jacob said, Swear to me this day; and he sware unto him: and he sold his birthright unto Jacob.

³⁴ Then Jacob gave Esau bread and pottage of lentiles; and he did eat and drink, and rose up, and went his way: thus Esau despised *his* birthright.

Genesis 27:1-40

¹ And it came to pass, that when Isaac was old, and his eyes were dim, so that he could not see, he called Esau his eldest son, and said unto him, My son: and he said unto him, Behold, *here am I*.

² And he said, Behold now, I am old, I know not the day of my death:

³ Now therefore take, I pray thee, thy weapons, thy quiver and thy bow, and go out to the field, and

BIBLE REFERENCES:

I Jacob's High Evaluation of the Birthright that Esau Despised

1. Esau's and Jacob's respective vocations in keeping with their dispositions, Genesis 25:27, 28.
2. The satisfaction of a present hunger more important to Esau than the prospect of future blessings, Genesis 25:29, 30;

Hebrews 12:16.

¹⁶ Lest there *be* any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright.

3. Jacob's farsightedness and craftiness in securing the birthright, Genesis 25:31-34.

II Jacob's Acquisition of Esau's Blessing, through Deceit

1. Isaac's plan to bless Esau, Genesis 27: 1-4.
2. Rebekah's selfish desire for Jacob's welfare, and her plan of deceit, Genesis 27:5-17.
3. Jacob's adoption of his mother's plan to deceive his father, Genesis 27: 18-25.
4. Jacob's blessing, Genesis 27:26-29.

III The Lie Revealed, and Esau's Remorse

1. Esau's return from the hunt, and his expectation of the blessing, Genesis 27:30, 31.
2. Isaac's reaction an indication of the seriousness and finality of the blessing, Genesis 27:32, 33;

Hebrews 12:17.

¹⁷ 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.

3. Esau given a blessing inferior to Jacob's, Genesis 27:34-40.

NOTES:

Our last lessons in the Old Testament brought us up to the end of Abraham's life. Before his death he sent his servant, Eliezer, to Haran to secure a wife for his son, Isaac; and, as a result, Rebekah became the wife of Isaac and the mother of twin boys, Jacob and Esau. Esau was the elder of the two and entitled to the privileges that, by custom, went to the first-born of every family. This was called the birthright because it belonged to the eldest son, solely because of his position in the family, and not by reason of any special gifts with which he might have been endowed.

The birthright gave the eldest son a certain authority and prestige while the father was alive, but its value increased immeasurably after his death. Families in those days were units, tightly knit together for purposes of convenience as well as for safety; and during the life of the father the eldest son was second in honour in the family circle (**Genesis 49:3**; ³ ¶ Reuben, thou *art* my firstborn, my might, and the beginning of my strength, the excellency of dignity, and the excellency of power:). He was also given a double portion of his father's goods (**Deuteronomy 21:17**; ¹⁷ But he shall acknowledge the son of the hated *for* the firstborn, by giving him a double portion of all that he hath: for he *is* the beginning of his strength; the right of the firstborn *is* his). Later, when the Lord established the tabernacle worship, the eldest son was to be set apart for God's service (**Exodus 22:29**; ²⁹ ¶ Thou shalt not delay to *offer* the first of thy ripe fruits, and of thy liquors: the firstborn of thy

take me *some* venison;

⁴ And make me savoury meat, such as I love, and bring *it* to me, that I may eat; that my soul may bless thee before I die.

⁵ And Rebekah heard when Isaac spake to Esau his son. And Esau went to the field to hunt *for* venison, *and* to bring *it*.

⁶ ¶ And Rebekah spake unto Jacob her son, saying, Behold, I heard thy father speak unto Esau thy brother, saying,

⁷ Bring me venison, and make me savoury meat, that I may eat, and bless thee before the LORD before my death.

⁸ Now therefore, my son, obey my voice according to that which I command thee.

⁹ Go now to the flock, and fetch me from thence two good kids of the goats; and I will make them savoury meat for thy father, such as he loveth:

¹⁰ And thou shalt bring *it* to thy father, that he may eat, and that he may bless thee before his death.

¹¹ And Jacob said to Rebekah his mother, Behold, Esau my brother *is* a hairy man, and I *am* a smooth man:

¹² My father peradventure will feel me, and I shall seem to him as a deceiver; and I shall bring a curse upon me, and not a blessing.

¹³ And his mother said unto him, Upon me *be* thy curse, my son: only obey my voice, and go fetch me *them*.

¹⁴ And he went, and fetched, and brought *them* to his mother: and his mother made savoury meat, such as his father loved.

¹⁵ And Rebekah took goodly raiment of her eldest son Esau, which *were* with her in the house, and put them upon Jacob her younger son:

¹⁶ And she put the skins of the

sons shalt thou give unto me). God chose the Levites, instead, when they alone of the twelve tribes stepped out from the idolatry of the golden calf at Mount Sinai (**Numbers 8:14-17**; ¹⁴ Thus shalt thou separate the Levites from among the children of Israel: and the Levites shall be mine. ¹⁵ And after that shall the Levites go in to do the service of the tabernacle of the congregation: and thou shalt cleanse them, and offer them *for* an offering. ¹⁶ For they *are* wholly given unto me from among the children of Israel; instead of such as open every womb, *even instead of* the firstborn of all the children of Israel, have I taken them unto me. ¹⁷ For all the firstborn of the children of Israel *are* mine, *both* man and beast: on the day that I smote every firstborn in the land of Egypt I sanctified them for myself).

God had not, at this time, imparted His law to any particular people, and, divine worship, was carried on by each family, through its family head. (**Genesis 8:20**; ²⁰ ¶ And Noah builded an altar unto the LORD; and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt offerings on the altar. **Genesis 12:8**; ⁸ And he removed from thence unto a mountain on the east of Beth-el, and pitched his tent, *having* Beth-el on the west, and Hai on the east: and there he builded an altar unto the LORD, and called upon the name of the LORD). This, too, became the responsibility of the eldest son when the father died. The holder of the birthright also succeeded the father in the government of the family; and later, of the kingdom, when the Israelites became a nation (**II Chronicles 21:3**; ³ And their father gave them great gifts of silver, and of gold, and of precious things, with fenced cities in Judah: but the kingdom gave he to Jehoram; because he *was* the firstborn).

Jacob was about 70 years of age at this time, and had surely seen his grandfather, Abraham, for he was 15 when that great man died. As a boy, no doubt Jacob had heard Abraham tell the story of God's wonderful dealings with him and the glorious promises for his posterity, and Jacob must have become intensely interested. He could not help being reminded that it was Esau, the first-born, who was the heir and the channel through which these blessings would naturally flow.

In this particular case, however, it was the design of God that the elder should serve the younger (**Romans 9:10-13**; ¹⁰ And not only *this*; but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, *even* by our father Isaac; ¹¹ (For *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;) ¹² It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. ¹³ As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated); and God would have brought that to pass in the way He thought best, in His own time, and in a manner consistent with His own perfection. According to God's plan, Jacob, the younger, was to be the father of the family that eventually would be the means through which the Messiah should come. The mother, Rebekah, knowing God's plan (**Genesis 25:22, 23**; ²² And the children struggled together within her; and she said, If *it be* so, why *am* I thus? And she went to enquire of the LORD. ²³ And the LORD said unto her, Two nations *are* in thy womb, and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels; and *the one* people shall be stronger than *the other* people; and the elder shall serve the younger), took the matter into her own hands and influenced Jacob to use deceit to bring it to pass in what she thought was God's time.

We can see a vast difference between these two men. Esau was a man of the field, and a hunter; while Jacob was a man who dwelt in tents and tended cattle and livestock, being of a milder and gentler disposition than Esau. Esau was not a farsighted man and was concerned only with the things at hand, the incidents of the moment. This tendency reacted against Esau in the matter of his birthright, for one day when he came in from the field, hungry and weak from his exertion, he agreed to give his younger brother that birthright for a mess of pottage. Jacob, being a farsighted person and

kids of the goats upon his hands, and upon the smooth of his neck:

¹⁷ And she gave the savoury meat and the bread, which she had prepared, into the hand of her son Jacob.

¹⁸ ¶ And he came unto his father, and said, My father: and he said, Here *am* I; who *art* thou, my son?

¹⁹ And Jacob said unto his father, I *am* Esau thy firstborn; I have done according as thou badest me: arise, I pray thee, sit and eat of my venison, that thy soul may bless me.

²⁰ And Isaac said unto his son, How *is it* that thou hast found *it* so quickly, my son? And he said, Because the LORD thy God brought *it* to me.

²¹ And Isaac said unto Jacob, Come near, I pray thee, that I may feel thee, my son, whether thou *be* my very son Esau or not.

²² And Jacob went near unto Isaac his father; and he felt him, and said, The voice *is* Jacob's voice, but the hands *are* the hands of Esau.

²³ And he discerned him not, because his hands were hairy, as his brother Esau's hands: so he blessed him.

²⁴ And he said, *Art* thou my very son Esau? And he said, I *am*.

²⁵ And he said, Bring *it* near to me, and I will eat of my son's venison, that my soul may bless thee. And he brought *it* near to him, and he did eat: and he brought him wine, and he drank. ²⁶ And his father Isaac said unto him, Come near now, and kiss me, my son.

²⁷ And he came near, and kissed him: and he smelled the smell of his raiment, and blessed him, and said, See, the smell of my son *is* as the smell of a field which the LORD hath blessed:

²⁸ Therefore God give thee of the dew of heaven, and the fatness of

having, above all, a desire to have the birthright for himself, tendered the offer that was accepted. The writer of the book of Hebrews tells us that Esau afterward regretted his bargain and sought to regain the birthright but could not (Hebrews 12:16, 17; ¹⁶ Lest there *be* any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright. ¹⁷ 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).

Covenants, in those days, were made with all seriousness and usually were sealed, or declared final, by a feast. The fact that Esau ate Jacob's pottage of lentils was in itself a testimonial that their agreement was final. Once made, a contract would never be broken, even though it proved to be unwise.

We can see a vast difference between those men and many men of today in this regard. Individuals, in their personal lives; corporations, in their business affairs; and nations, in their international dealings -- all regard very lightly their covenants one with the other. It is very easy for a man and wife to secure a divorce, thinking that in doing so they are declaring void the vows that were originally taken for life. Too many corporations will quickly cancel their agreements, unless they are legally prevented from doing so, if the officers of the corporation can see a way to make more money. International treaties and understandings are hardly worth the price of the paper they are written upon.

Sometime after this transfer of the birthright, Isaac became fearful that his illness would soon cause his death. He decided to make arrangements that his family would be well cared for. He called Esau and told him to go into the field, kill a deer, and prepare some venison. Then he promised to give Esau a blessing. No doubt the purpose for the feast of his favourite meat was to seal the covenant, or blessing, as well as to satisfy his hunger at that time.

But Rebekah loved Jacob; and after overhearing the conversation between Isaac and Esau, she conceived a plan that would give the blessing to Jacob. It was a plan of deceit, and before their lives were over both Jacob and his mother paid dearly for their fraud and deception. The only thing commendable in Jacob, through all this, is the value he placed upon the birthright and parental blessing, and the desire he had for them, contrasted with the careless way Esau neglected his birthright, which should have been a precious thing to him.

Esau's birthright was only a type of the real birthright that God has for His own. We find from the story of these men's lives that their individual experiences with God were separate from this transfer of the coveted family privilege. But many people, like Esau, despise their birthrights. The young often do!

Some young people are children of godly parents and because of that fact are the recipients of many priceless privileges. The prayers, examples, and other influences of a Christian home are blessings that are denied to many young people. But the birthright that is God-given is not ours because of our birth into a family of godly parents. It is ours individually by the new birth -- the adoption into the family of God. Without that experience of salvation we are heirs of no good thing, but as sinners are only entitled to eternal punishment.

A few popular denominations teach that children born in so-called Christian homes are entitled to the rite of Water Baptism and by that are sealed for God. But God tells us that "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23); and the only inheritance we have, as sinners, is death: "The soul that sinneth, it shall die" (Ezekiel 18:4). Satan wins a major victory when he can get men to believe his lie that they are Christians because of their earthly

the earth, and plenty of corn and wine:

²⁹ Let people serve thee, and nations bow down to thee: be lord over thy brethren, and let thy mother's sons bow down to thee: cursed *be* every one that curseth thee, and blessed *be* he that blesseth thee.

³⁰ ¶ And it came to pass, as soon as Isaac had made an end of blessing Jacob, and Jacob was yet scarce gone out from the presence of Isaac his father, that Esau his brother came in from his hunting.

³¹ And he also had made savoury meat, and brought it unto his father, and said unto his father, Let my father arise, and eat of his son's venison, that thy soul may bless me.

³² And Isaac his father said unto him, Who *art* thou? And he said, I *am* thy son, thy firstborn Esau.

³³ And Isaac trembled very exceedingly, and said, Who? where *is* he that hath taken venison, and brought *it* me, and I have eaten of all before thou camest, and have blessed him? yea, *and* he shall be blessed.

³⁴ And when Esau heard the words of his father, he cried with a great and exceeding bitter cry, and said unto his father, Bless me, *even* me also, O my father.

³⁵ And he said, Thy brother came with subtilty, and hath taken away thy blessing.

³⁶ And he said, Is not he rightly named Jacob? for he hath supplanted me these two times: he took away my birthright; and, behold, now he hath taken away my blessing. And he said, Hast thou not reserved a blessing for me?

³⁷ And Isaac answered and said unto Esau, Behold, I have made him thy lord, and all his brethren have I given to him for servants;

parents' righteous lives; but the Word of God refutes the devil's doctrine and shows us plainly the way by which we must be saved if we would inherit eternal life.

Guard well your birthright! Do not sell it for a "mess of pottage" or some other trifle of the world. Some have done so and then have "sought it carefully with tears" but have failed to regain it before being ushered into the presence of God to answer for their life on earth.

QUESTIONS

1. What were Esau's and Jacob's respective vocations?
2. What was Esau's great sin against himself' and the rest of the family?
3. Memorize Hebrews 12:16, 17.
4. Was Jacob justified in the use of deceit because he was prompted to do so by his mother?
5. Was the fact that God had told Rebekah of His plan for Esau and Jacob a justification for her deceit?
6. What was the real blessing that God intended for Jacob's posterity?
7. In what way did Jacob suffer for his deceit?
8. Which one of the sons was married, and, how were the wives received by the family?
9. What kind of blessing was given to Esau when he came in from the hunt?
10. Why was the birthright so important?

and with corn and wine have I sustained him: and what shall I do now unto thee, my son?

³⁸ And Esau said unto his father, Hast thou but one blessing, my father? bless me, *even* me also, O my father. And Esau lifted up his voice, and wept.

³⁹ And Isaac his father answered and said unto him, Behold, thy dwelling shall be the fatness of the earth, and of the dew of heaven from above;

⁴⁰ And by thy sword shalt thou live, and shalt serve thy brother; and it shall come to pass when thou shalt have the dominion, that thou shalt break his yoke from off thy neck.