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Genesis 25



Genesis - Steve Gregg

In "Genesis 25," Steve Gregg discusses the significance of the prophecy regarding the destinies of two nations, Israel and Edom. He explains that being part of the chosen people of Israel did not guarantee individual salvation, and emphasizes the importance of valuing spiritual privileges over physical gratification. The cautionary tale of Esau serves as an example of the dangers of prioritizing immediate desires over God's will, and reminds Christians of the responsibility to carry forward God's promises.

Transcript

Alright, we are now going to see the end of the story of Abraham. There's really not much more story to tell. He has done all that he's been called to do.

You know, Abraham lived 175 years, and 100 of those years were in obedience to God. And yet, in 100 years time, his entire ministry consisted of one thing, and that's having a child, a son. And this he did 75 years before he died.

Isaac was born 75 years before Abraham died, and there wasn't really much else, as far as God's purpose is through Abraham, that we know of, that he had to accomplish in his life, except that he raised that one son. Which is interesting, because it suggests that that might be, in itself, a ministry significant enough to justify a person's lifetime. Just raising a child, raising children.

And it's not even that Isaac himself was that significant. I mean, he was significant in terms of what God had promised would happen, but the man Isaac did very little of significance in his life, except he had an important son, Jacob. And really, nothing really very significant happened until centuries later, when Moses led the children out of Egypt.

But the beginning stages of this family line, the most important thing anyone had to do was to have a kid. And sometimes they blew it on that score, too. I mean, Abraham had mistaken God's will, and had Ishmael, and some people see that that's sort of like someone starting a ministry ahead of God.

And I didn't mention this when we were going through Abraham's life, but I might just

now, because he's sort of the first instance we find in the Bible of a phenomenon that we find repeatedly in the Bible. And that is that God really does give somebody a ministry. God really does give them a promise.

God does reveal to them what their significance is, or is going to be. And they kind of get ahead of God in it. And they blow it.

But then God eventually makes it happen another way. And Ishmael is often seen that way. God gave Abram the ministry of having a seed, a son, through whom all the nations will be blessed.

Well, he didn't wait for that to happen supernaturally. He didn't wait for God to do it. Instead, he went into Hagar, and she had a child.

And Abram for 13 years thought that was the one, thought that this was the ministry, that he'd been in the ministry for 13 years, but it was entirely founded in the flesh. And then he had to get rid of that son, had to send him out of the home, which was a heartache. But then he had Isaac, and Isaac was the real one.

But then he had to offer Isaac up on Mount Moriah. And truly, in his own heart, he had to die to him. He had to die to that vision that he had of the significance of his son and so forth.

But he also believed that God would raise that vision again, would raise that son from the dead. And that's exactly what the writer of Hebrews says did happen. He says he received him from the dead in a figure, figuratively speaking.

He had to die to that vision, and then God raised it again. And we see later on in Joseph's life, Joseph received visions or dreams from God early in his life about what his significance will be. He's going to rule.

Even his brother is going to bow down to him. And, you know, he talks about it to them as if this is something that's going to be happening. And then what happens? He gets sold into slavery and for, you know, 13 years he's out of circulation, rotting in jail and doesn't look like that dream is going to come true at all.

I wonder if that vision even may have died in his mind at that time. And then once it seemed like it was entirely hopeless, you know, it gets revived again when Pharaoh has his dream and Joseph is elevated. And sure enough, God's vision comes true.

And Moses is sometimes seen as an example of this, too, because it says in Hebrews, not a Hebrew in Stephen's speech in Acts chapter seven, that when Moses slew the Egyptian, when he was 40 years old, he did so thinking that the Israelites would know that God had sent him to deliver them from Egypt. That's what Stephen says, that Moses thought that the Israelites would know that he had been sent to deliver them. So he

knew that he believed he was sent to deliver them.

And his first act of deliverance was to kill that Egyptian that was smiting in Hebrew. But then Moses had to flee for 40 years and watch sheep in the desert. And his vision of being the deliverer of his people was completely dead.

He totally lost all hope for it. When God appeared to him at the burning bush and said, I'm sending you to deliver your people, Moses said, no, I think you've got it all wrong. You've got the wrong guy.

I mean, he was he didn't have that vision anymore. The vision was dead, but it got resurrected. And we see that that happening many times that God gives someone a vision for the ministry they're going to have or some promise for what they're going to do.

And they get a little ahead of God and they do it on their own in the flesh. And then it's not right. Then, you know, sometimes comes when it seems like, well, I guess it's just not gonna happen at all.

And if it's not of God, then it doesn't. You know, if it wasn't from God, it won't happen. But if it is of God, God makes it happen because God only likes to.

He likes to do things himself. He doesn't like us to do things in the flesh, especially established works of ministry or whatever he has for us to do. If God is going to accomplish something, he's going to do it himself.

And sometimes our premature zeal for it can lead to a false start. It has to be. Then you have to go back to square one, as Abram had to do when he had to release Ishmael, whom he had thought was the promised seed for so long.

Anyway, he finally did get Isaac and he raised Isaac and not much is told about that story, except that he had to get Isaac a bride. And that has happened. And now that Isaac has a bride, Abraham is dismissed from the story, but he doesn't really die at this time.

After the choosing of a bride for Isaac, the next thing we read is the death of Abraham. But this is something we have to get used to. The narration likes to dismiss a previous character who's been the focal point before starting to talk about someone else and usually records their death.

But often before it actually happens. You see, we're going to read about Jacob and Esau being born by the end of this chapter. And Jacob and Esau were 15 years old before Abraham died.

Isaac was 75 when Abraham died and he was 60 when Jacob and Esau were born. So

they were 15 years old when Abraham died. But we read about the death of Abraham now because we're finished talking about him.

The story has reached its conclusion and it's sort of just a literary way of dismissing him from our consideration. We're going to read about how he died, but then we're going to go back to a time when he was very much alive and cover many years while he was still living. But where he's not in the picture.

And so we read, Abraham again took a wife and her name was Keturah and she bore him Zimran, Jokshan, Midan, Midian, Ishbak and Shuah. Jokshan begat Sheba and Dedan. And the sons of Dedan were Asherim, Latushim and Lumim.

And the sons of Midian were Ephah, Epher, Hanak, Abida and Eldah. All these were the children of Keturah. Now, it says, Abram gave all that he had to Isaac, but Abram gave gifts to the sons of the concubines, which Abraham had.

And while he was still living, he sent them eastward away from Isaac, his son, to the country of the east. Now, here it says he had concubines and sons by concubines. Keturah is mentioned in First Chronicles, chapter one.

Verses 32 and 33 in a genealogy there. First Chronicles has about nine chapters of genealogy that opened the book, and it says, as it's talking about that portion of the genealogy where Abram is figures into it in First Chronicles one, 32 and 33. It says, now the sons born to Keturah, Abraham's concubine, Zimran, Jokshan and Sophah gives their names and their and the grandsons.

But notice Keturah is referred to as Abraham's concubine. Now, here in Genesis, Abraham again took a wife, but a wife and a concubine can be both terms for the same woman, because concubine was like a lesser wife, a wife that was not of the full status of a free wife. It'd be more like a servant or slave who had become a wife.

And we don't know, actually, whether Abraham took Keturah after Sarah's death or whether this has just been preserved to be mentioned at this later point, because Abraham is about to be dismissed narrative. And there's a bit of information about him that had happened earlier that didn't get mentioned in the course of telling the story. Many scholars think that Keturah might have become one of his concubines, along with Hagar, while Sarah was still alive.

And the reason for suggesting that would be that Abraham, at the time Isaac was born, was said to be as good as dead for having children. His body was as good as dead. He was too old to father children when Isaac was born.

It was a miracle that he and Sarah were able to have a child at that age. And now, if that was true, when Abraham was 100 years old and now Sarah dies, when Abraham is 137 and he takes another wife and has six more children, then how could his body have been

said to be as good as dead 37 years earlier? So some feel that Keturah was a concubine that he took at an earlier time. But as the story of Abraham is about to be concluded, there's this other detail about some other sons he had, which actually happened earlier, but there never was really the proper occasion to interject it into the story because the story didn't want to be interrupted.

So it's possible, you know, if we say what would be the most logical time frame for this marriage to Keturah and her sons being born, it would seem that it would be after Hagar had born Ishmael. Because obviously he went into Hagar because he didn't have any children, so he didn't have Keturah and her children yet. But perhaps before Isaac, because by the time Isaac came along, it says that Abraham's body was as good as dead for having children.

And there was that 13 years in there after Ishmael but before Isaac that these six sons could possibly have been born. And it may be that he had taken Keturah at that time and that Hagar and Keturah were called concubines because it says he gave gifts to the sons of the concubines, plural. Now, there may be other concubines unnamed, but it would seem likely that the narrative would have told us the full list of all the names of Abraham's sons, especially since Keturah's sons are mentioned.

Why would any other sons of his be left out? It appears he had eight sons total, Ishmael, Isaac and these six sons. And two of them only are worthy of mention probably in terms of later interest in the story. One of the sons is Midian and you know the Midianites eventually were enemies of Israel.

But before they were, Moses married a Midianite girl. His father-in-law was a priest of Midian. When he fled from Pharaoh, he went out to the land of Midian and married a Midianite woman.

So she was descended from Abraham also, but through a different line than the Jews. Then also in verse two, we've got Shua. Now, Shua, we don't know much about, but we do know that one of his descendants was a friend of Job's.

So that tells us that Job lived after this time, maybe not very much after. The time frame of Job is not known exactly, but it seems to have been before the exodus. And it obviously is after the time we're reading about, because in chapter two of Job, in verse 11, where Job's three friends are first mentioned by name.

One of Job's friends is called Bildad the Shuaite. And Shuaite is one who's descended from Shua. So one of Job's friends was descended from Abraham that way.

Another of his friends was a Temanite, Eliphaz the Temanite. And the Temanites were from Esau, who has not yet been recorded in Genesis. So obviously, if Job had friends who were Shuaites and Temanites, that means that they lived at least a couple of

generations after him.

After the time we're looking at, if not more. OK, so Abraham separates all of his other sons from Isaac. Isaac is the one who's going to be the favored one.

And that might be even just in Abraham's sympathies, but it's probably more simply because God had revealed to him that Isaac was the one that was to be the son of promise. And so he didn't send his other sons away empty. He gave them gifts and being as rich as he was, he probably gave them, you know, enough gifts to get established somewhere else.

But he gave the rest of his estate to Isaac. This is the sum of the years of Abraham's life, which he lived, verse 7 says, 175 years. Now, we were told he was 75 when he came to the land of Canaan.

So he had been there exactly one century. And he was 100 years old when Isaac was born. So Isaac was exactly 75 years old at this time.

And Ishmael would be like almost 90. And that's important because he's involved here, too. Then Abraham breathed his last and died at a good old age.

An old man and full of years and was gathered to his people and his sons, Isaac and Ishmael, buried him in the cave of Machpelah, which is before Mamre in the field of Ephron, the son of Zohar, the Hittite, the field which Abraham purchased from the sons of Heth. There Abraham was buried and Sarah, his wife, and it came to pass after the death of Abraham that God blessed his son Isaac and Isaac dwelt in Beer-le-Hiroy. Now, Ishmael and Isaac apparently were on good terms at this time, although Ishmael would be probably living down closer to Egypt.

And he apparently by this time had stopped mocking Isaac. He had never really been, as far as we know, actively or violently hateful toward Isaac, though we know that when Ishmael was a teenager that he mocked Isaac and had to be sent from the home. But that a lot of water had gone under bridge since then.

Ishmael is almost 90 years old and he's no doubt prosperous and doing well and doesn't have any hard feelings. And so they joined together to honor their father and to give him a burial with the mother. The expression at the end of verse eight, he was gathered to his people, is going to be used regularly from this point on when one of the patriarch dies and its exact meaning is not evidently, you know, it's not obvious to us initially.

We might say that it means he went to heaven. That's what a lot of Christian expositors want to say. He was gathered to, you know, his soul was gathered into heaven with his ancestors, but his ancestors were idolaters.

We're told that in Joshua chapter 24, the opening verses that Terah and the ancestors of

Abraham worshipped other gods. So it's not really likely that his father's plural were godly and or that they ended up ultimately at the same eternal destiny as he. At least not initially.

And yet the Old Testament really doesn't tell us anything at all about where people go when they die. What in the Old Testament, the place of the dead is called sheol, but it's the commonplace of all dead. It's sometimes translated hell in the King James Version.

That's unfortunate because it's not what we think of as hell. It's just the repository of the dead. It's just the undifferentiated place.

They're all dead. People end up when they die. In some cases, it means nothing more than the grave.

So when his neighbor was gathered to his father's, it's not likely it means that he went to heaven to be with his father's up there. As we might, for example, if we had Christian parents be gathered to our father's, as it were, when we die in heaven, it would mean something very different to us. It also can't really mean that his body was placed in the tomb of his father's because it wasn't.

His father's have been buried somewhere else. He was placed in the tomb with his wife. It'd be more likely if that was the meaning that he was gathered to his wife.

I think it's most likely that the term gathered to his father's just is sort of the same thing as to mean he went the way of all flesh, which is another biblical expression we find when someone dies. They go the way of all flesh. It just means his father's before him had died.

He joined them in that state of being now a historical character. He was now an ancestor, not a living person. He joined them in the state of being somebody from the past, someone who's dead now.

When David's baby died. He made a comment to his servants because he had been fasting for his baby to recover from the sickness from which the child died and the child did not recover. And David got up and started eating again when the baby died.

Now, customarily, people would fast as an act of mourning the dead. But David had fasted while the child was alive and then stopped fasting when the baby died. And the servants thought that's a strange reversal of custom.

And they said, why did you fast when the child was alive and not and you eat after the child dies? And David said, well, I mean, when when he was alive, I was beseeching God with fasting, thinking perhaps God would spare him. But now the child's dead. There's no reason to fast anymore.

God's not going to send him back here. Actually, the way that David said is I will go to him, but he will not come to me. Now, many Christians understand it to mean, well, that means the baby died, went to heaven because David said he was going to go to where the baby was.

And we assume David would die a saved man and went to heaven. At least that's how many would think. But even then, it's very possible that David was thinking merely this.

I will go to the place of the dead where my child is. My child is not going to come back from the state of being dead. You know, I will join him where he is, but it may not be a reference to heaven or hell or anything like that.

Maybe simply the fact that I'm going to die like he's dead. I will join him in the realm of death in Sheol. So to be gathered to your fathers, to be gathered to your people.

Actually, this says gathered to his people, but in other places in the Old Testament, it's going to refer to these gathered to his fathers. It just means he died. Just a Hebrewism, an idiom.

Now, verse 12. Now, this is the genealogy of Ishmael, Abraham's son, whom Hagar, the Egyptian, Sarah's handmaid, bore to Abraham. And these were the names of the sons of Ishmael by their names, according to their generations.

The first born of Ishmael, Nebuchadnezzar, then Kidar, then Abdeel, Midsam, Mishma, Duma, Masa, Hedar, Tima, Jeter, Naphish and Kedemah. That makes, I believe, 12. These were the sons of Ishmael, and these were the names of their towns and their settlements.

Twelve princes, according to their nations. Now, God had promised Abraham back in Genesis 17 and verse 20 that he would make Ishmael the father of 12 princes. Remember when God had told Abraham for the first time that Sarah would have a child and he'd be called Isaac and Abraham sort of laughed and said, Oh, let Ishmael live before you.

In other words, you know, this what you're suggesting isn't necessary. There's already a boy in the picture. Why don't we just bless him? And God said, well, no, Isaac's going to be the one, but I'll do what you said with Ishmael, I'll bless him, too.

And 12 princes will come from him. And so here this simply tells us that that's what was fulfilled. The promise was made back in Genesis 17, 20 and fulfilled or registered as fulfilled in chapter 25, verse 16.

These were the years of the life of Ishmael, 137 years. And he breathed his last and died and was gathered to his people. They dwelt from Havala, as far as Shur, which is east of Egypt, as you go toward Assyria.

And he died in the presence of his brethren. This is the genealogy or the told adult of Isaac, Abraham's son. Abraham begot Isaac.

Isaac was 40 years old when he took Rebekah, his wife, the daughter of Bethuel, the Syrian, of Padnerim, the sister of Laban, the Syrian. Padnerim, I believe, just means the plain of Aram. Aram, from which we get the word Aramaic, is basically Syria.

And so he was a Syrian, Rebekah was, and Bethuel is called a Syrian. And it says, Now Isaac pleaded with the Lord for his wife because she was barren and the Lord granted his plea and Rebekah, his wife, conceived. Now, we will find out that she was 60 years old when the babies came.

So they had been married 20 years. I mean, she was, Jacob was, excuse me, Isaac was 60 years old when Jacob and Esau were born. Now, Isaac was 40 when he married Rebekah.

So 20 years they'd been married and she had not gotten pregnant. And so Isaac pleaded for her, interceded for her, and God opened the womb. It's interesting, really.

First of all, we can see that the 20 years of Rebekah's barrenness, just like the years of Sarah's barrenness, were a test of not only Isaac's faith, but it would be a test of Abraham's faith because he was still alive at this time. He still was going to live. He lived for 30, 35 years after Isaac was born.

And therefore, he lived those 20 years knowing that Isaac's wife was barren. And here, all the promises of God are supposed to be fulfilled through Isaac's offspring. And he's got a woman who's barren.

Going 20 years trying to have kids and not able to have kids is a pretty long period of time. I mean, it's enough to prove someone to be barren. And we're going to find that many of the significant characters in the Bible were born from women who were initially barren.

Sarah was barren, of course. Rebekah was barren. Rachel was barren initially.

Samuel was born to a barren woman. Hannah was barren. John the Baptist was born to a barren woman.

This seems to be a pattern many times. Of course, Jesus was born to a woman who was not technically barren as we think of it. But certainly, since she was a virgin, she was not naturally able to have a child in that state.

Many times, the birth of important people is supernatural in the Bible. And God seems to like to make sure that he gets all the credit for important things like that. So he allows a woman to be barren for all so that everyone knows if she has a baby, this is from God.

In this case, Isaac interceded for her. And it was his intercession that is said to have brought about the conception. And so we can see that we know that God intended for Isaac to have a multitude of offspring.

But he didn't let that happen until Isaac got worried about it and started praying about it. God allowed there to be enough time of barrenness there to establish the fact that they needed God to make this happen and that it wasn't going to just happen naturally. It says, but the children, verse 22, struggled together within her.

And she said, if all is well, why am I this way? These lots of times women can feel the baby kicking inside, but there are twins inside of her and they were kicking each other. And they were struggling with each other. And she said, what's up with that? If everything's well, why is this happening inside of me? So she went to inquire of the Lord.

Now, I don't know where people went in those days to inquire of the Lord. There probably was some established place of sacrifice that Abraham and Isaac had offered their sacrifices and and went to inquire of the Lord. And the Lord actually met her there.

Whether this is a booming voice from heaven that spoke to her, whether there's a theophany or God appeared to her and spoke to her, we're not really told that she received a revelation and a prophecy from Yahweh. And Yahweh said to her, two nations are in your womb, two peoples shall be separated from your body. One people should be stronger than the other, and the older shall serve the younger.

Now, by the way, the wording in the Hebrew, the older shall serve the younger, is ambiguous. I just read this in a commentary recently that a man, a scholar who had written a whole paper on the Hebrew of this birth oracle, as it's called, said that the way the sentence structure is, that last line could be translated. Actually, it's not older and younger, it's the big and the small in the Hebrew.

Basically, it could be it could be read, the big shall serve the small, or it could go the other way, because either one of those could be the subject or the object of the verb. So it could mean the small shall serve the big. Now, translators, of course, have chosen to translate this way because that's the way it has turned out.

We know that the younger son, Jacob, ended up being the prominent son, and therefore we know what the sentence means. But apparently it was somewhat ambiguous. Certainly it means one will serve the other, but the way it was in the Hebrew apparently was sufficiently ambiguous that perhaps Rebecca and Isaac had differing opinions as to which way it was to be read.

If so, that would somewhat justify Isaac more than we might tend to justify him otherwise in seeking to give the birth, the blessing later on to Esau. If he understood the birth oracle the other way around from the way Rebecca did, they each thought that

their favorite son was going to be the one that was to rule the other one. I don't know.

I think it's not easy to justify Isaac in wanting to bless Esau when he did, because there was also the sale of the birthright in between. And that itself should have settled the matter, although we don't know that this sale of the birthright was made public or whether Isaac and Rebecca knew about it. It seems unlikely that they wouldn't.

But the point here is, although the Hebrew is ambiguous, the later history tells us what it means. It was the older son Esau who would serve the younger son, Jacob. Now, as I'm sure many of you know, Paul quotes this last line of the birth oracle in Romans chapter 11, excuse me, 9, where he is talking about the predestination of God.

And the sovereignty of this decision. And we read in Romans chapter nine, verse 10 and following. And not only this, but when Rebecca had conceived by one man, even by her father, Isaac.

For the children not yet being born, nor having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God, according to election, might stand not of works, but of him who calls. It was said to her, the older shall serve the younger. Now, that's the birth oracle we just read, and then Paul says, as it is written, Jacob, I have loved Esau, I have hated that.

That's a quote from Malachi chapter one, an entirely different part of the Bible. But there are two Old Testament statements about Esau and Jacob that Paul quotes to make his point. Now, what is Paul's point? Now, it's very common, both for Calvinists and Armenians, to suggest that this is saying that God chose.

Jacob over Esau to be saved and that Paul is here talking about how God chooses some people to be saved and some to be lost. Now, Calvinists, when they see it that way, and they all they always do, they would say this shows that God elects people to be saved based on nothing in them. It specifically says in verse 11, the children not yet being born, nor having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God, according to election, might stand not of works, but of him who calls.

It was said that the point is made clearly that this decision on God's part, this calling that the older would have to serve the younger was a decision made not based on any works that these guys had done because they hadn't been born yet. Now, the Armenian usually says something like, well, but God foreknew that Jacob would be a better man or a man of faith and that Esau wouldn't be a carnal man and so forth, and therefore, God made the choice while they're in the womb. But I don't think that works because Paul is emphasizing that the reason the announcement was made while they're in the womb is to show that God's call is not based on what men would do, not even what God foreknew that they would do.

But rather, just on the sovereign calling of God. This is a section of Paul where he's

making a very strong statement about God's sovereign right to choose what he wants to choose and that man may have nothing to do with some of the choices that God makes. And I believe that.

However, I don't believe that the Calvinists or the Armenians who think that way are correct because both of those views suggest that God is here talking about Jacob being chosen to be saved and Esau being chosen to be not saved. And they think that Paul's whole argument in Romans 9 here is about the salvation, people being elected to salvation or not. But that's not Paul's argument.

If you read from the beginning of the chapter on through, Paul is arguing something very different. He's trying to explain why it is that there are promises made to the seed of Abraham, to Israel, of salvation through the Messiah. But how it was that anyone could see that most of the Jews who are just have very were not saying that was the conflict that April was that Paul was trying to explain here.

Why is it that God made promises to the seed of Abraham? About the Messiah and about salvation, and yet we see many most Jews today are not believers in the Messiah and therefore, by definition, are not saved in the Christian sense of that word. And so Paul knows there's that that question. Paul knows there's that problem, that dilemma.

And so he addresses it and the way he addresses it is simply this. He says promises are made to Israel. Promises made to Abraham's seed do not apply to everybody who has that biological connection to Abraham.

He says in verse 6, they are not all Israel who are of Israel. There are many who come from Israel that is from Jacob. Jacob's name was Israel.

There's Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Jacob was Israel and those who came from Israel are the Jews. But Paul says not all of those who came from Israel are Israel.

They are not the Israel that promises apply to. Only a remnant of the Jewish people really are Israel. And Paul establishes that by going through the early history.

He points out that Abraham had more than one son, but only Isaac was called. Ishmael and those sons of Ketur, they had as much claim to being the seed of Abraham as Isaac had, but they were nothing. They were nothing.

Only Isaac was the chosen seed. He didn't have any more descent from Abraham than the others did. There were eight men descended from Abraham and only one of them was Israel, was the Israel of God, was the chosen one.

That was Isaac. And then he points out, and among Isaac's sons there were two and only one of them was chosen. Chosen for what? Not chosen for salvation.

Chosen to be the progenitor of the Israel of God, the true Israel. Now, you see, in every generation in the early days, God had to decide which of the sons of the family were going to be the ones that are going to carry on the family name and the promise that God made to the sons of Abraham. He chose Isaac in his generation.

He chose Jacob in his generation. For what? Not for salvation, particularly, although I'm not denying that those men were saved. But there's no suggestion that Ishmael, who was not chosen for that, was a lost man.

I don't know that Ishmael isn't saved. And I don't know that Esau wasn't saved. True, Esau made a pretty carnal decision by the end of this chapter, for which he's remembered negatively.

But I mean, Abraham made some carnal decisions, too. So did David. Lots of people make carnal decisions.

That doesn't mean that ultimately they are lost individuals. Ishmael lived a long time after this. And Esau lived a long time after this.

And a lot of these men, in the latter mentions of them in Genesis, they seem like pious and good men. But they weren't chosen to be the fathers of the nation. Now, the nation of Israel was not chosen to be saved.

It was chosen to bring forth the Messiah who would save all the nations within the nation of Israel. Some individuals were saved and some were not. In Moses' day, Moses was a saved Jew, but Korah, his contemporary priest, was not saved.

And there's always been some who were truly in the nation of Israel who, as individuals, were not saved. And there were people who were not in the nation of Israel who individually were saved. Being saved is a different issue than being in Israel, because Israel, the nation, was an entity that God called to bring about some earthly purpose of God, namely to bring the Messiah into the world.

But individuals in Israel and outside of Israel, their salvation was based on individual choices they would make. So Esau was not in Israel, but he could have been saved. Jacob was in Israel, but he could have not been saved.

I think Jacob was saved, but even if he had not been, he was still the founder of the nation. There were many Jews later on who were in the nation, but were not saved individuals, including the ones who crucified Christ. The Pharisees and the Sanhedrin, they were in the nation of Israel.

They were part of a chosen people, but they weren't saved as individuals. Now, what is being said here by Paul is that there are promises made to Israel. There are promises made to the city of Abraham, but that's not everyone who's physically born from them.

There is a nation within the nation. Within the ethnic nation, there is a spiritual remnant, and they are Israel. They are the children of Abraham.

Only those who are of the faith of Abraham are the children of Abraham, Paul would say in Galatians 3. So when he quotes, the older shall serve the younger, he's not making a statement about Jacob will be saved, he's the younger one, and Esau will be lost, he's the older one. After all, that wouldn't be a very good description to prove that. Just because one man serves another man, it doesn't prove that one's saved and one's not saved.

There must have been lots of servants in the Roman Empire who were Christians and whose masters were lost. The prediction that the older will serve the younger has nothing to do with anyone's salvation. It has to do with the fate of their respective nations and the roles they would play on the earth.

We could say we believe that God raised up America to be a great nation for some purpose he had in the earth, but that doesn't mean that everyone who's in America is a saved individual. Salvation is an individual matter, but God does choose nations to do certain things, to bring forth certain earthly purposes, and Israel was chosen to do that. What's very clear in this birth oracle is this.

The two boys were in the womb and God said, what? In verse 23, Genesis 25, 23. Two nations are in your womb. Two peoples shall be separated from your body.

In other words, this oracle does not have to do with the personal fate of Jacob or the personal fate of Esau. This has to do with the two nations that would come from them. The nation of Israel from Jacob and the nation of Edom from Esau.

These two nations are represented in these two sons who were their progenitors. One people will be stronger than the other. The Israelites will be stronger than the Edomites.

And the older, that is the nation that comes from the older man, Esau, will serve the younger, that is they'll serve the nation that comes from the younger man. It can't be a reference to them as individuals. First of all, because the whole oracle is about the nations that would come from them.

Two nations are in your womb. But more than that, Jacob the individual, I should say Esau the individual, did not serve Jacob. In his lifetime, Esau never served Jacob.

If this is a prophecy about the individual men, then it was a false prophecy, because Esau never served Jacob. There was an occasion when the two of them met and Jacob bowed down seven times to Esau, but we never see Esau bowing down to Jacob any time. So the prophecy cannot be applied to individuals and it's not even a prophecy about salvation.

Because once we realize that this is about the nation of Israel and the nation of Edom, we realize it's not about salvation at all, because the nation of Israel, that didn't guarantee salvation. And being an Edomite didn't guarantee you're not saved. If you're an Edomite, it guaranteed you're not part of Israel.

But it doesn't mean you're not part of God's ultimate kingdom. After all, Job was probably an Edomite. And there are other Edomites in the Bible who were men of faith.

In the book of Jeremiah, there's an Edomite that comes to Jeremiah's aid and no doubt is a man of faith. Again, this is talking about racial and ethnic and national destinies in terms of earthly function in God's purposes. Israel clearly was the nation that was chosen above all nations to function in a certain way.

But that choice has not related to the individual salvation of the participants. Individuals are saved by faith. So that's an important thing to note, because Paul, when he quotes it, obviously quotes it knowing very well what it's about.

It's not about the man Jacob and the man Esau, although it was uttered about them while they were in the womb. It's really referring to the nations that were in them. So, verse 24, Genesis 25, 24, when her days were fulfilled for her to give birth, indeed, there were twins in her womb and the first came out red.

He was like a hairy garment all over. So they called his name Esau, which means hairy. Later, he's also called red.

Edom means red. Esau means hairy. And he was both hairy and red.

Actually, later here, he is said to be called red because he sold his birthright for red lentils. But I'm sure they had other reasons to call him red if he was covered with red hair like an orangutan. You know, really, honestly, he was so hairy that Jacob, wishing to impersonate him to his blind father, wore goat's pelts with the hair on them.

And the father felt the goat's hair and said, yeah, I see. So, OK. And, you know, the man was as hairy as a goat.

He was a shaggy guy, like maybe that's where the legends of the Yeti come from or something. But he was he was covered with red hair from birth. Now, children, even who grow up to be hairy men, often aren't born with a lot of hair on them.

This is a very strange thing. In fact, if there had been evolutionists in those days, they might have wanted to use him as, you know, a specimen, exhibit A of the missing link. Anyway, the boys grew.

Oh, afterward. OK. Afterward, his brother came out, verse 26, and his hand took hold of Esau's heel.

So his name was called Jacob. Now, the name Jacob is sometimes referred to as one who takes the heel. I think literally the name Jacob just means grabber.

But since he grabbed the heel, they call him grabber. And it can mean one who grabs something from someone else like a supplanter. Later on, once Jacob has deceived his father and taken the blessing that was intended for Esau.

Esau said, is not his name rightly called grabber or supplanter, for he has supplanted me these two times, he said. So there's something of Jacob's character that's already revealed at birth. He's one and it's no doubt providential.

No doubt God actually had this happen. It's sort of an omen that that he would seize from Esau what Esau would have had by natural birth order. And it says Isaac was 60 years old when she bore them.

So, of course, that's 20 years after he got married because we were told he was 40 when they married. So the boys grew and Esau was a skillful hunter, a man of the field and apparently a man's man, such as a father would be proud of. But Jacob was a mild man, dwelling in tents, such as a mother might like.

And sure enough, Isaac loved Esau because he ate at his game. But Rebecca loved Jacob because he helped out in the kitchen. How do we know he helped out in the kitchen? Because that's where we find him in the next part.

He's cooking a stew. Now, we've got a mild man who's an indoors type guy, helps with the cooking, sort of a mama's boy. He's her favorite.

And maybe it's because he was mama's favorite that he became like that. I mean, a boy might become somewhat feminized a bit when he's closer to his mother than to his father. Esau was not close to his mother, but to his father.

And therefore, there was this rivalry in the home. Now, I've never really been able to understand how any parent can favor one child over another. We see it happening again and again in these families in the Bible.

You know, Jacob later favored Joseph over the other brothers because he came from his favorite wife. But still, I mean, your offspring, how could you not love them all equally? People often ask me, you know, which child of mine is my favorite? The concept doesn't even compute. How can you have a favorite? Every child I think of of mine is my favorite.

You know, just name any of them. They're my favorite when they come to my mind. So I've never been able to understand how these parents in the Bible can show this kind of favoritism.

But again, these are very primitive peoples, not highly principled. I mean, they don't

have the Holy Spirit. They don't have a Christian culture.

The idea of the equality of all people or the equal importance of all people is a very modern concept since the Enlightenment. In our day, we take it for granted that, you know, every child's worth equal amount. In those days, they probably evaluated people, including their own children, by their usefulness or their apparent usefulness.

And to Esau, I mean, to Isaac, Esau was more useful because he liked wild game. And that boy could bring it in. And Rebecca found Jacob more useful because he was more helpful around the house.

An indoors guy. Now, in spite of that fact about Jacob, he's pretty rugged in his later life. You know, I will find that he when he travels, he sleeps on a rock, you know, as he's on his way to, of course, he does have a strange dream.

Maybe that's why. But when he spends 20 years with Laban, he spends 20 years sleeplessly and so forth. He's still a tough guy.

I mean, he was genetically, I guess, endowed with strength. But his manner until he fled from Esau was that of a gentle, quiet, you know, indoors type of guy. Now, Jacob cooked a stew and Esau came in from the field and was weary.

And Esau said to Jacob, please feed me with that same red stew, for I'm weary. Therefore, his name was called Edom, which means red. But Jacob said, sell me your birthright as of this day.

And Esau said, look, I'm about to die. So what profit shall this birthright be to me? And Jacob said, swear to me as of this day. So he swore to him and sold his birthright to Jacob.

And Jacob gave Esau bread and stew of lentils. Then he ate and drank a rose and went his way. Thus, Esau despised his birthright.

Now, the lentils were red lentils, and therefore, the stew was red in color. And Esau said, give me some of that red stuff. And so he was called Red.

You'll find that lots of times there's more than one reason a person or place is called by a certain name. And he's called Red because of this. But he's also no doubt called Red largely because of his redness, his red hair.

Now, this act on Esau's part is remembered against him in the New Testament as something that manifested his carnality because he did not value his birthright as much as he valued a single meal. Now, when you're hungry and you've been out, you know, working hard and you're famished, it's not easy to wait for a meal. But I mean, it's kind of juvenile to to not be able to, you know, take a little time and fix yourself a meal and

you have to eat the food that's right there and you'll sell your birthright for it.

I mean, there is such a thing as being a little more patient. He could have cooked himself something. He could wait till his mom cooked something, but he just didn't care about the birthright.

That's what's shown here. I mean, a single meal was worth more to him on this occasion than his birthright. And so it says he despised his birthright.

The word despised doesn't mean he actually held it in absolute contempt or disdain, but it means that he didn't value it. It was not valued by him. Now, what is the birthright after all? Why did Jacob want it? Now, the birthright in any family in those days in that culture would include a number of things.

The generally the birthright naturally went to the older son. And that's why Esau had it. Esau hadn't bought it.

He had been born to it. The oldest son had the right of primogeniture, which means that he was going to be the leader of the family officially when the father would die. Not only would he be the official leader of the family, but he would also inherit more of the father's wealth than the other children would.

Generally, it would be a double portion. Which means, for example, if there were two sons and the oldest son got a double portion, he got twice as much as the other son. So the father's inheritance would be divided three ways.

The oldest son would get two thirds and the youngest son one third. If there were 12 sons, the inheritance would be divided up 13 ways and the oldest son would generally get two portions and the other 11 would get the one each. So there was an economic benefit to the birthright, certainly.

And also there was this right of being in power, being the one in charge of the family. Esau may not have cared that much about the family. He liked going out and being in the woods, so he didn't care if he was in charge of the family.

And as far as wealth was concerned, probably that family was so wealthy he couldn't care less if he got one third or two thirds. It doesn't matter. I'm hungry.

I want something now. But in this particular family, there was more involved in the birthright because, of course, there was a promise of the seed of Abraham to bring blessing to the whole world. And it's obvious that not every child in the family would be the one to do so.

And the birthright here, no doubt, would be understood to be the right to become the next in line for the continuing unfolding of God's promises in the family through the

generations. One of those two would have to be the one. And the birthright, no doubt, meant to them the right to be the one through whom the Abrahamic promises would be fulfilled to the world.

If it didn't mean that to them, it certainly did to God, because that's how it turned out. Jacob, who did get the birthright on this occasion, did become that one. If they knew that at this time, then Esau is showing particular contempt for the things of God that he did not cherish the special and unique promise that God had given to the family and his role into which he was born to bring forth God's purposes.

If he knew that this birthright included that, which he probably did, then Esau is showing himself to be much more interested in immediate gratification of his desires than in long-term spiritual issues related to God's will. And obviously, one of the biggest problems he had was that he did not appreciate, you know, the idea of delayed gratification. He was hungry.

He was, of course, exaggerating. I'm going to die. What good is my birthright to me if I'm dead? So give me the food.

Obviously, he wasn't. I mean, he was able to drag himself in. If you're really starving, you're immobile for at least a little while before you die.

You lose your power to move around before you lose your life from starvation. And he was obviously still on his feet. So he's not literally starving.

He just felt like he was. And obviously, he would have lived long enough to cook his own pot of lentils if he'd wanted to. But he just didn't care.

Now, you may remember that the book of Hebrews mentions this story and applies it to Christians generally in verses 16 and 17. Hebrews 12, 16 and 17 says, lest there be any fornicator or profane person like Esau, who for one morsel of food sold his birthright. Now, it goes on to talk about him begging for the blessing, but that's the story we haven't come to yet, so we won't talk about.

Next verse, but verse 16 says that a fornicator or a profane person is like Esau. Why? Because they compromise their spiritual. Privilege as Christians in order to gratify a momentary lust.

And in Esau's case, it was a lust for food. It might be a lust for money or for or for sex or for any other thing. He mentions that fornicators are in that in that class, too.

Fornicators and profane people are sort of the same type. They're both like Esau. Now, he's not saying that Esau was a fornicator, though he might have been.

He did eventually have four wives, and we don't know if he was a womanizer or what.

But that's not what we're being told. We're not being told here that he was a fornicator.

He's saying that Christians should be sure not to be fornicators. Or profane people, because such people have something in common with Esau. And he lost something very valuable because he didn't value it.

And what he did value was instant gratification of a mere physical desire. That is, he was hungry, he wanted to eat. And so people who make moral compromises because of, you know, placing the gratification of a physical desire above their spiritual well-being and the purposes of God for their life and are making the same mistake that Esau made.

And therefore, he becomes sort of the prototype of a carnal person who had actually spiritual potential. Now, we do know that it was predicted that he would not prevail over Jacob. The birth oracle had indicated that something like this would happen.

But I don't think it was determined by the birth oracle. I think it was determined by Esau's behavior on this occasion. And the birth oracle foreseeing that predicted that Jacob would come out ahead in this situation.

But nonetheless, we can see that Esau didn't value what he should have valued. On the other hand, we don't know that Jacob valued it for the right reasons either. We don't know what Jacob was thinking.

He was not a spiritual man either at this point. We will see as his story goes on that he's a he's a secular man. He knows about God and he thinks of God as his father's God.

Actually, the way that Jacob refers to God in many of the chapters ahead, he refers to God as the God of my ancestor Abraham and the fear of my father Isaac. That is, he was Abraham's God and my father Isaac feared that God too. But he doesn't say my God.

Not until late in life does Jacob come to a place where he says that God is my God. And and there is evidence that though Jacob is not an immoral man or an evil man, he is a fairly secular man. And he may have wanted the birthright only for its economic advantages.

We don't know. It'd be nice to think that he valued the spiritual side of things. Maybe he did.

But it's hard to know with with him because he seems still to be very much a heel catcher in later parts of the story and not necessarily a man with a good Christian conscience, you know. Anyway, we stop there and we will come back to this story after God.