

Introduction

1. Last week we started our study of the lives of Issac and Jacob and saw how the births of Esau and Jacob were related to God's redemptive plan and the result of three things:
 - a. God's supernatural provision by opening up Rebekah's womb
 - b. God's divine election in the choosing of Jacob through whom His plan would be manifest
 - c. And God's sovereign will in which He causes all things to work exactly according to His plan
2. We also saw in the births of Esau and Jacob some foreshadowing:
 - a. There was foreshadowing in Rebekah's pregnancy: the twins struggling almost violently within Rebekah's womb foreshadowed not only the tumultuous relationship the two would have with each other outside the womb, but the struggle their descendants would have throughout their history (Israel vs. Edom)
 - b. There was also some foreshadowing in the birth: Jacob emerged from the womb second, but grasping onto the heel of Esau which foreshadowed how he would acquire not only the birthright of the first born, Esau, but the blessing of the first born
3. We're going to look at the first of these today, Jacob acquiring the birthright of Esau which is found in Genesis 25:27-34 and the story is one of contrasts (READ)

A. The first contrast to note is that there was a difference in who Esau and Jacob were (25:27-28)

1. Esau and Jacob were about as different as they could be:
 - a. The text tells us that Esau was a **"skillful hunter, a man of the field"**:
 - 1) When I read this the first thing that comes to mind is Grizzly Adams who was a California mountain man who lived in the early 1800s
 - 2) Some of us are old enough to remember the 1974 movie based loosely on his life, "The Life and Times of Grizzly Adam" and the TV series that followed it
 - 3) Part of the reason I envision Esau like this is because we were told back in v. 25 that his skin was red and he was covered with hair all over his body
 - 4) Here, we learn that he grew up to be a hunter and was **"a man of the field"** which indicates he preferred living outdoors
 - 5) We see in v. 28 that this is one of the reasons Issac favored Esau over Isaac (READ)
 - b. On the other hand, Jacob is described as a **"peaceful man, living in tents"**:

- 1) The phrase “**living in tents**” is an obvious contrast to Esau’s preference for the field
 - 2) The phrase translated “**peaceful man**” is a bit more challenging to understand:
 - a) It’s translated differently by the different Bible versions including “**peaceful**”, “**even-tempered**”, “**quiet**”, and even “**plain**”
 - b) It’s the Hebrew word for perfect or complete, and is used in the Bible to refer to being healthy, well-behaved and civilized, and even guiltless or blameless
 - c) In fact, God used it to describe Job in Job 1:8 when He said to Satan: “**Have you considered My servant Job? For there is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, fearing God and turning away from evil.**”
 - d) Here it likely has the meaning well-behaved and civilized, especially since living in tents was a sign of civility in the ANE
 - e) However, blamelessness (like in Job’s case) may be implied as well simply meaning He was a God-fearing man
 - 3) This may have been one of the reasons Rebekah favored Jacob over Esau (RE-READ 28):
 - a) This is speculative because the text omits the reason why she loved Jacob over Esau
 - b) It’s not unreasonable since she’s a woman he’s presented as the less wild and rugged, more civilized of the two
 - c) However, it may also have been because she remembered God’s word to her from 25:22-23
2. The overall sense in these few verses is that Esau is presented as the wilder, less civilized of the two, while Jacob is presented as the more wholesome and civilized of the two:
- a. This is certainly what we are about to see in what takes place next
 - b. It’s also what we see throughout the next few chapters in Genesis and the New Testament description of Esau which we’ll get to in a few minutes

B. There’s a second contrast and it’s the difference in Esau’s and Jacob’s behavior (READ 25:29-34a)

1. As stake in this passage is the birthright of the firstborn:
 - a. In the ANE, the birthright referred to the rights given to the firstborn son to inherit not just the bulk of His father’s estate, but to become the head of the household once his father died
 - b. It was not only a right of the first born but a responsibility to take over the care and responsibility of the family estate
 - c. The OT Law stipulated that the firstborn was to be given a double portion of the inheritance (twice what the other sons received) and even through this is before the Law it is believed that something similar occurred in Isaac’s day
 - d. So, by default Esau would have received twice that of Isaac and would become the head of the household

- e. The birthright was his, but not for long...
- 2. The best way to describe Esau's behavior in this passage is demanding and impulsive:
 - a. The NASB translation makes it appear as if Esau kindly asked for some of Jacob's stew, but it was actually a demand:
 - 1) He speaks in the imperative mood and a more literal translation is "**Let me swallow, I pray, some of that red red stuff**"
 - 2) The word he used here, swallow, is also more akin to gulping something down and was used of feeding animals; one commentator notes that it was a "course expression suggesting bestial voracity" and another that it represents "an uncouth gluttony" (uncouth means to lack good manners and refinement)
 - 3) In essence, Esau comes in like a hungry beast demanding to be fed
 - b. Esau's behavior is not only demanding, but impulsive:
 - 1) It's hard to fathom why someone would give up a significant inheritance for a bowl of stew
 - 2) But you see, Esau was "**famished**" and in his own words, "**about to die**": we know this is melodramatic hyperbole because if he were truly about to die one bowl of soup wouldn't fix that, and he wouldn't have simply got up and walked away after eating!
 - 3) Esau was driven by his fleshly impulses, only thinking of his immediate fleshly appetite

****Now let's turn to Jacob's behavior**

- 3. I believe the best way to describe Jacob's behavior is shrewd:
 - a. Many pastors and commentators refer to his behavior here as scheming, conniving, selfish, and even deceitful but I don't think that's a fair assessment
 - b. There's no doubt he took advantage of the situation and Esau's impulsiveness, but the Bible never calls what he did sin, nor does it even insinuate it; but it does call out Esau (both in this passage and the NT)
 - c. I believe Jacob was being shrewd here:
 - 1) One of the best definitions I've heard is that shrewd means to be able to quickly evaluate a situation and be wise enough to take advantage of it
 - 2) Jesus used it in this way when He said, "**Behold I sent you out as sheep in the midst of wolves; so be shrewd as serpents and innocent as doves.**" (Matthew 10:16)
 - 3) We have to remember that God had already declared while Jacob and Esau were still in the womb that the birthright would ultimately be Jacob's, not Esau's (25:23)
 - 4) We don't know whether Rebekah shared this intel with Jacob but it's reasonable to assume she did, and Jacob saw an opportunity here to seize what God promised

C. The third contrast between Esau and Jacob is the difference in what they valued (25:34b)

1. We just saw how much Jacob valued even sought to acquire the birthright
2. Now, in contrast, look at how Moses summarized Esau's perspective (25:34b): **"Thus Esau despised his birthright":**
 - a. The basic meaning of the word despise is to accord little worth to something, or see it as worthless
 - b. We see this in Esau's own words in v. 32: **"Behold, I am about to die; so of what use then is the birthright to me?"**
 - c. Satisfying his temporal, fleshly hunger pains was of more value to Esau than his inheritance
3. One of the things we need to remember about the birthright is that it wasn't just about inheriting wealth, but the authority and responsibility of caring for the family estate and continuing the family legacy:
 - a. Isaac had inherited the majority of Abraham's estate which was already significant, and according to Genesis 26:12-14 continue to grow so wealthy that it made the Philistines envious
 - b. Esau stood to inherit the majority of this and it's mind-numbing that he was so willing to throw it all away for a single bowl of stew!
 - c. That's bad enough, but even more so he was shirking his responsibility as the first born son to take over and care for the family and the estate

Conclusion/Takeaways

1. One of the things that I've continued to stress as we've studied through the lives of Abraham and now Isaac and Jacob is that it's not really about Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; it's about God advancing and furthering His redemptive plan
2. So, the obvious question with today's passage is what does all of this have to do with God's redemptive plan?
3. The answer is found in Hebrews 12 where the author uses Esau as a warning to his fellow Hebrews who would forfeit the blessings of God and an eternal inheritance by thinking too lightly of Jesus Christ, just as Esau forfeited his inheritance by thinking too lightly of his birthright (READ Hebrews 12:16-17):
 - a. Esau was rejected by God because he was an immoral and Godless man
 - b. Esau was rejected by God because he was a foolish man
 - c. Esau was rejected by God because he refused to repent
4. The same is true today of those who despise Jesus and think too little of Him today:
 - a. They will be rejected by God because they are immoral and Godless
 - b. They will be rejected by God because they are foolish
 - c. They will be rejected by God because they refuse to repent
 - d. Ultimately, they will be rejected by God because they do not know Jesus

5. But what about us who are saved?
 - a. Do we ever behave immorally or in a Godless way?
 - b. Do we ever act foolishly like Esau, only living for the moment, satisfying our fleshly desires, instead of focusing on the eternal inheritance and rewards we have in Christ?
 - c. Do we ever engage in willful sin and refuse to repent?
 - d. If these are true of us, then aren't we in some way like Esau and not truly valuing what we've been given in Christ?