

Coastal Notes: Genesis 25:1-18: A Life Well-Lived
November 30, 2025

INTRODUCTION (3-4 minutes)

Quick question before we start: How do we measure a successful life? Is it by wealth, longevity, or something more?

When you think of Abraham's sons, who comes to mind? Probably Isaac. Maybe Ishmael if you know the story. But did you know Abraham had at least EIGHT sons? After Sarah died, Abraham remarried a woman named Keturah. She bore him six more sons. Add Ishmael and Isaac—that's eight sons total.

This passage is the conclusion to Abraham's story, which began in Genesis 12. This bookend serves to summarize God's faithfulness to His promise.

Main idea: The passage shows that a life built on God's promises, like Abraham's, is a **full life, even if the promises aren't fully realized in one's lifetime**. Let's look at the first section...

POINT 1: MANY SONS, ONE HEIR (Genesis 25:1-6) [Read verses 1-4]

1. Many Sons, One Heir (Genesis 25:1-6)	
1 Now Abraham took another wife, whose name was Keturah.	4. The sons of Midian were Ephah and Epher and Hanoch and Abida and Eldaah. All these were the sons of Keturah.
2 She bore to him Zimran and Jokshan and Medan and Midian and Ishbak and Shuah.	5 Now Abraham gave all that he had to Isaac;
3. Jokshan became the father of Sheba and Dedan. And the sons of Dedan were Asshurim and Letushim and Leummim.	6 but to the sons of his concubines, Abraham gave gifts while he was still living, and sent them away from his son Isaac eastward, to the land of the east.

a. Abraham Had Many Sons (vv. 1-4)

- **After Sarah died (Genesis 23), Abraham married again.** Her name was Keturah (v. 1). Now, Keturah's name is significant. It means "incense" or "fragrance"—from the Hebrew root *qatar*, meaning "to burn incense, to make smoke rise." The idea is smoke rising. **Pleasant.**
- **Many Christians aren't aware Abraham married again.** And although some of her sons will become Israel's enemies like Dedan and Midian, there is **NO** Scriptural reference that suggests Abraham was wrong to remarry.
- **After Rebekah married Isaac, Abraham was all alone with his servants.** By the time we get toward Abraham's death, he is **one hundred seventy-five years old**. This is **thirty-five years AFTER** Isaac's marriage to Rebekah. So God blessed Abraham with additional sons.
- **Keturah bore Abraham six sons:** Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak, and Shuah (v. 2). The text even lists some grandsons (vv. 3-4)—showing that these sons had children, became tribes, and spread out. These descendants become **Arabian peoples**, and some of them—like the **Midianites**—will actually become Israel's enemies later in the biblical story.
- **So let's count Abraham's sons:** Ishmael (through Hagar) - sent away in Genesis 21, Isaac (through Sarah) - the promised son, Six sons through Keturah (vv. 2-4). That's at least **EIGHT sons!**

God blessed Abraham abundantly. He wasn't just the father of Isaac—he was the "father of many nations" (Genesis 17:4-5). This is that promise being fulfilled. But here's where it gets interesting...

b. Isaac Inherits Everything (vv. 5-6) [Read verses 5-6]

- **Look at the contrast: Verse 5: "Abraham gave ALL that he had to Isaac."** Everything. The land. The wealth. The covenant promises. **ALL OF IT** goes to Isaac.
- **Verse 6:** "But to the sons of his concubines Abraham gave gifts, and while he was still living he sent them away from his son Isaac, eastward to the east country." Notice the stark differences:
 - **Isaac gets: "ALL that he had"**
 - **The others get: "Gifts"** (some money, some livestock, some provisions)
 - **Isaac stays: In Canaan** (the promised land)
 - **The others go: "Eastward"** (away from the covenant)
- **This isn't about favoritism.** This is about God's promises to Abraham based on His sovereign grace. Abraham had MANY sons, but **Isaac was the CHOSEN one** to carry the covenant forward. **Not the oldest** (Ishmael was older than Isaac), **Not from the mom with the most children** (Keturah had six sons), but rather based on **God's promises to Abraham**.

c. The Pattern of "East" in Genesis

- **Now here's something crucial you need to see. "East" in Genesis is ALWAYS significant. Eden is in the East (Genesis 2:8).**
- **"The LORD God planted a garden in Eden, in the east. "** That was the **Origin point, but also what was lost, and people starting going east.**
 - **Cain goes East after murdering Abel** (Genesis 4:16): "Cain went away from the presence of the LORD and settled in the land of Nod, east of Eden"
 - **East** = away from God's presence, judgment, exile
- **Tower of Babel is in the East** (Genesis 11:2)
 - **"As people migrated from the east, they found a plain in the land of Shinar"**
 - **East** = rebellion against God
- **Lot looks East toward Sodom** (Genesis 13:11)
 - **Lot "journeyed east"** and settled near Sodom
 - **East** = choosing the world over God's promises
- **Abraham sends Keturah's sons East** (Genesis 25:6)
 - **"Abraham sent them away from his son Isaac, eastward to the east country"**
 - **East** = away from the covenant, away from the promised land
- **The theological pattern is clear:**
 - **West/Canaan = Covenant, God's presence, blessing, promise**
 - **East = Exile, judgment, away from God, loss of blessing**
- **So when Abraham sends Keturah's sons east:**
 - **He's removing them from the covenant line**
 - **They will NOT inherit the promise**
 - **They go away from God's presence** (symbolically)
 - **Isaac alone remains in Canaan = Isaac alone inherits**

d. This Pattern Repeats Throughout Genesis

And here's what's stunning: This isn't the first time brothers separate, and it won't be the last. There's a pattern running through the book of Genesis.

▪ **BROTHERS IN GENESIS: THE PATTERN OF CONFLICT AND SEPARATION**

Brothers → Conflict → Separation → One Chosen, One Sent Away

Brothers	Chosen	Sent Away	Direction	Result
Cain & Abel	Abel (then Seth)	Cain	East	Two lines (violence vs. godliness)
Shem, Ham, Japheth	Shem	Ham (Canaan cursed)	Scattered	Canaanites become enemies
Ishmael & Isaac	Isaac	Ishmael	East (Gen 25:18)	Arabs vs. Israelites
Keturah's sons & Isaac	Isaac	Keturah's sons	East (Gen 25:6)	Midianites, Arabs (some enemies)
Esau & Jacob	Jacob	Esau	Southeast (Edom)	Edomites vs. Israelites
Joseph & brothers	Joseph (initially rejected)	Joseph to Egypt	Not east!	Reconciliation!

- **Do you see it? Brothers separate.** One is chosen. The other goes EAST.
- **GOD IS TRACING ONE SPECIFIC LINE:** Seth → Shem → Abraham → Isaac → Jacob → Judah → David → Jesus. He's narrowing it down, generation by generation, until the **Messiah comes**.

e. This Is About God’s Promises, Not Merit

So why does God choose Isaac over the others? Is Isaac better? No. Is Isaac older? No—Ishmael was 14 years older. Is Isaac more impressive? We don't know—the text doesn't say. God chooses Isaac because... **God chooses Isaac (See Romans 9:6-8).**

Application

Here's what this means for you:

- **If you're a Christian today, it's not because you were born into the right family.**
- **It's not because you're better than others.**
- **It's not because you worked harder**
- **Or have better character.**

It's because God, in His grace, revealed himself to you.

That's humbling. And that's freeing. You can't boast (it wasn't your merit). But you can rest (it's not based on your performance). God is the awakener!

POINT 2: A FULL LIFE FAITHFULLY LIVED (Genesis 25:7-10) [Read verses 7-11]

Now we come to Abraham's death, and the language here is absolutely beautiful.

2. A FULL LIFE FAITHFULLY LIVED: (Genesis 25:7-10)

7	These are all the years of Abraham's life that he lived, one hundred and seventy-five years.	9	Then his sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah, in the field of Ephron the son of Zohar the Hittite, facing Mamre,
8	Abraham breathed his last and died in a ripe old age, an old man and satisfied with life; and he was gathered to his people.	10	the field which Abraham purchased from the sons of Heth; there Abraham was buried with Sarah his wife.
		11	It came about after the death of Abraham, that God blessed his son Isaac; and Isaac lived by Beer-lahai-roi.

a. "Satisfied with Life" (v. 8)

- Verse 8 says: "Abraham breathed his last and died in a ripe old age, an old man and satisfied with life; and he was gathered to his people." The Hebrew word for "satisfied" is *sabea'* (שָׂבַע)—it means "full, satiated, satisfied." Genesis 15:15: *As for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried in a good old age.*
- This isn't just about living a long time. This is about living COMPLETELY. Abraham lived 175 years (v. 7), but more importantly, he lived a **FULL** life. He died **satisfied**. **NOT** because all the promises were fulfilled in his lifetime—they weren't! He **NEVER** possessed all of Canaan. He only had one legitimate son. He lived as a sojourner. **But he died satisfied because his life was built on GOD'S PROMISES.**
- Hebrews 11:13 says of Abraham and the other patriarchs: *"These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth."*
- Abraham died satisfied because: He knew God's promises were true. He saw God's faithfulness throughout his life. He trusted the promises even when he couldn't see the fulfillment.

b. "Gathered to His People" (v. 8)

- The phrase "gathered to his people" is fascinating. This can't just mean "buried with his ancestors" because Abraham wasn't buried with his ancestors—he was the first of his line in Canaan.
- This is covenant language, pointing to those that died before him. People like Abel, Seth, Enoch, Noah, Shem.
- Today, through progressive revelation, we know that those who die are in heaven. Jesus showed us that with the transfiguration. So when we die we are going home to be with our people.

c. Reconciliation at the Grave (v. 9)

- Now watch verse 9: "Then his sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah. **Isaac and Ishmael. Together.** At their father's funeral. These brothers had been separated for decades—probably 60+ years since Genesis 21 when Ishmael was sent away. But they come back together to honor their father.

- **Death brings reconciliation. This is a powerful picture.** Abraham's death brought his divided family back together. **And this acts as narrative foreshadowing of how Jesus' death on the cross brings reconciliation:**
 - Between humanity and God
 - Between estranged brothers and sisters
 - Between Jew and Gentile
- **Application**
 - **What animosity might you be holding onto?**
 - **If Isaac and Ishmael can set aside their past to honor their father**, what reconciliation might God be calling you to pursue?
 - **Life is too short. Eternity is too long.** Pursue reconciliation while you can.

d. Even after Abraham dies, God's purposes don't stop.

- **The blessing continues to Isaac.** Notice where Isaac lives: **Beer-lahai-roi—"the well of the Living One who sees me."** That's the well where Hagar encountered God (Genesis 16:13-14).
- **The place where God saw her in her affliction.** Isaac lives at the place that reminds him: God sees. God knows. God is alive and present. And God blessed Isaac there.
- e. **The promise doesn't die with Abraham. It continues.** The Lord is always focused on future generations. "We must set up our children and future generations to live satisfied lives like Abraham—which happens when they build their lives on God's promises, not their own desires.

POINT 3: GOD'S BLESSING CONTINUES (Genesis 25:11) [Read verse 12-18]

3. GOD KEEPS HIS PROMISES—EVEN TO ISHMAEL (Genesis 25:12-18)	
<p>12 Now these are <i>the records</i> of the generations of Ishmael, Abraham's son, whom Hagar the Egyptian, Sarah's maid, <u>bore to Abraham</u>;</p> <p>13 and these are the names of the sons of Ishmael, by their names, in the order of their birth:</p> <p>Nebaioth, the firstborn of Ishmael, and Kedar and Adbeel and Mibsam</p> <p>14 and Mishma and Dumah and Massa,</p> <p>15 Hadad and Tema, Jetur, Naphish and Kedemah.</p>	<p>16 These are the sons of Ishmael and these are their names, by their villages, and by their camps; twelve princes according to their tribes.</p> <p>17 These are the years of the life of Ishmael, one hundred and thirty-seven years; and he breathed his last and died, and was gathered to his people.</p> <p>18 They settled from Havilah to Shur which is east of Egypt as one goes toward Assyria; he settled in defiance of all his relatives.</p>

- a. **Now we get Ishmael's genealogy. And you might be wondering: Why does Moses include this?** Why should we care about Ishmael's descendants? Hint. It has to do with God's promises.

b. God Remembers His Promise to Ishmael

- **Remember Genesis 17:20? God told Abraham:**

"And as for Ishmael, I have heard you: I will surely bless him; I will make him fruitful and will greatly increase his numbers. He will be the father of twelve rulers, and I will make him into a great nation."

- **And here it is—twelve princes (v. 16), just as God promised.** Ishmael has 12 tribes. Later, Jacob will get 12 tribes. God is faithful to both lines.

c. The Names of Ishmael's Sons (vv. 13-15).

- Moses lists them "by their names, in the order of their birth":
 1. Nebaioth (the firstborn)
 2. Kedar
 3. Adbeel
 4. Mibsam
 5. Mishma
 6. Dumah
 7. Massa
 8. Hadad
 9. Tema
 10. Jetur
 11. Naphish
 12. Kedemah
- **These become Arabian tribes. They settle "from Havilah to Shur which is east of Egypt as one goes toward Assyria" (v. 18).** There's that directional marker again: **EAST of Egypt.** Away from Canaan. Away from the covenant land.

d. "He Settled in Defiance of All His Relatives" (v. 18)

- **The last phrase of verse 18 is striking:** "He settled in defiance of all his relatives."
- **The Hebrew phrase can also be translated "in hostility toward" or "opposite" his brothers.** This fulfills what the angel told Hagar in **Genesis 16:12:**

"He will be a wild donkey of a man; his hand will be against everyone and everyone's hand against him, and he will live in hostility toward all his brothers."
- Ishmael's line lives in conflict. They're blessed, but they're not at peace.

e. The Theological Point: Why does Moses include this genealogy?

- **Because God keeps His promises—even to people outside the main covenant line.** God cares about Ishmael. He blesses Hagar. He keeps promises to people who aren't in the center of the covenant story. This should shape how we think about people outside the church:
 - **God isn't indifferent to them**
 - **He hasn't written them off**
 - **His common grace is real**
 - **His promises are reliable**
- **Also—and this is important—genealogies matter because people matter.** Every name in this list represents a real person, a real life, a real story. God doesn't treat people as footnotes. Neither should we.

CONCLUSION: EVERY NATION BLESSED (6 minutes)

So what is Genesis 25:1-18 really about? ***On the surface, it's about:***

- Abraham remarrying
- Abraham's death
- Ishmael's descendants

But underneath, it's about God's faithfulness to His promises—and the scope of those promises is breathtaking.

The Vision Expands Throughout Scripture: Fast forward to Isaiah. God gives the prophet a vision of what's coming: **[Read Isaiah 49:6]**

*"It is **too light a thing** that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to bring back the preserved of Israel; **I will make you as a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth."***

- **Did you catch that? God says it's "too light a thing"** just to save Israel. The plan is **BIGGER**. The Messiah will be a **light for the nations**—salvation reaching **to the end of the earth**. Then Paul picks this up in Romans 11. He's talking about God's plan for both Jews and Gentiles, and he says:

- **The Ultimate Fulfillment: Revelation 7 [Read Revelation 7:9-10]**

*"After this I looked, and behold, a **great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, 'Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!'"***

- **From every nation. All tribes. All peoples. All languages.**

Every single nation that spread out from Abraham—and every nation that came after—standing together before the throne of God, worshipping the Lamb.

THAT is the absolute completion of the promises. Every nation is blessed.

1. No one is outside God's concern

Notice how Moses carefully records Ishmael's twelve sons. How he tracks Keturah's descendants? God doesn't forget anyone. He doesn't write off entire people groups.

If you feel like you're on the outside, like you're the one who was "sent east," like you're not part of the main story—You need to know: God sees you. God has a plan for you. And in Christ, there's a place for you at the throne.

2. The gospel erases the divisions

- **In Genesis, the brothers separate.** East and west. Chosen and sent away. Conflict and hostility. But in Revelation 7, **they're all together. One multitude. One voice. One salvation.**

- **Galatians 3:28-29 says:**

*"**There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.**"*

- **The promise made to Abraham in Genesis 12 finds its fulfillment in you as a follower of Christ.** Remember **that a life based on God's Promises is a full life, completely satisfying.**

COMMUNION MEDITATION & BENEDICTION

This morning we ended with Revelation 7—every nation, tribe, people, and language before the throne. As we come to the table, I want you to think about something: **Christians all over the world come to this table. But we don't all understand it the same way.**

- **Many Protestants** (Baptists, Non-denominational, Some Pentecostal, Charismatic, anabaptists) see communion as **memorial**—..the bread and wine help us remember what Jesus did. Christ is not present in any special way beyond our remembrance."
- **Reformed Christians** like Calvin believe in **spiritual presence**—Christ is truly present by the Holy Spirit. As we eat by faith, the Spirit unites us to Christ. It's real communion, not just remembrance.
- **Lutherans** believe Christ is present "in, with, and under" the bread and wine—the elements stay bread and wine, but Christ's body and blood are genuinely there.
- **Catholics** believe in **transubstantiation**—the bread and wine actually become Christ's body and blood.
- **Eastern Orthodox** say the Holy Spirit makes Christ present in the elements, but they won't try to explain how. It's a mystery.

Different explanations. Different theologies.

But here's what struck me this week as I was finishing my podcast on Eastern Orthodox theology Calvin was asked to explain exactly HOW Christ is present in communion. And he said: "*I would rather experience it than understand it. It's a mystery too lofty for my mind to comprehend.*" I'm with Calvin on that.

The Holy Spirit makes Christ present. We truly commune with Him. How exactly? It's a mystery. And I'm okay with that.

And here's what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 10:17:

"Because there is one loaf, we who are many are one body, for we all share the one loaf."

One loaf = Christ. Many members = us, from every nation, every tradition. One body = united in Him.

Now here's something that troubles me. I've been to Catholic and Eastern Orthodox services. And even though some are now willing to say evangelicals might be Christians, they still won't let us take communion with them unless we're Catholic or Orthodox.

I understand their reasoning—they want to protect the sacrament, they have concerns about church discipline, they believe in apostolic succession.

But when Paul says, "we who are many are ONE body because we share the ONE loaf"—I don't think he meant "one body, but only if you're in the right institutional church."

My hope—and maybe this is naive—is that one day, the institutional barriers will come down. That Christians from every tradition who confess Jesus as Lord will be able to share the table together.

Because this table doesn't belong to Baptists or Catholics or Orthodox or Presbyterians. **This table belongs to Jesus.** And if we belong to Him, we belong at His table.

We're not there yet. The church is still divided. But one day—Revelation 7 promises one day we'll all feast together. Every nation, tribe, people, tongue, and yes, every denomination.

Until then, our table here is open. If you confess Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, you're welcome. Because we are many, but we are one body.

So as you come to the table:

The bread represents Jesus. The cup represents Jesus. The Holy Spirit makes Christ present. We participate in Him. We may not all explain it the same way, but we all proclaim the same Lord. Come and experience the mystery.

BENEDICTION: Numbers 6:24-26

"The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make his face shine on you and be gracious to you; the LORD turn his face toward you and give you peace."

- You are chosen by grace, not merit.
- You are blessed to be a blessing to all nations.
- Go in peace.

In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.