

=EVENTS FROM GENESIS=

Lesson 14
Jacob and Esau

AIM: to teach my pupils the Biblical accounts of the lives of Jacob and Esau in relationship to their parents and themselves, showing the bad results of following bad means to a good end.

POINT OF CONTACT: A picture of a boy walking a dog could be used. The leash could be cut, and at first, the dog could be leading the boy, and then the boy could be leading the dog. This is a picture of how lives are lived. They are lived in one of two ways: The fleshly lusts of bodies could lead hearts to want only satisfactions of appetites, or the wholesome convictions of hearts could dictate to bodies which desires should be followed and which should be “put down.” Does Job 31:7, “...mine heart walked after mine eyes...”, apply to the lives of Isaac, Rebekah, Jacob and Esau and to our lives, also?

INTRODUCTION: The lives of Jacob and Esau will be studied in two parts. As we study the first part of their lives, we will walk into a family art gallery which represents the four periods of time into which the background and composition of these lives could be divided. We will see whether there is any struggle to live lives that are well-pleasing to the Lord, or whether there is a submission to human circumstances and ambitions rather than to God.

- I. THE PERIOD OF LOVE AND CONTENTMENT. See Genesis 25:19-27. (This first picture in our art gallery is lovely, with soft, tranquil shades. As one views it, however, he sees a tiny, ugly mark which could mar the entire landscape. Let us learn the story behind this picture.)
 1. There was a sweet relationship between Isaac and Rebekah. (Briefly review the story of the servant’s getting the bride of God’s choice for Isaac.)
 - 1) Isaac loved Rebekah. See Genesis 24:67.
 - 2) Rebekah was in submission to her husband. Notice Genesis 24:64-67. (See also Ephesians 5:21-33.)
 2. They had a common desire to have children. They were married over 19 years and still had no children. Isaac prayed for Rebekah, asking God to give her a child. (Even though God had made the promise that there would be many, many descendants of Abraham, still it was good that Isaac asked for the fulfillment of this promise. See Matthew 7:7.)
 3. They shared God’s answer to Isaac’s prayer. After they had been married for 20 years—Isaac was 60 years old at the time—Rebekah gave birth to twin boys.
 - 1) God had revealed something prophetic to Rebekah before the birth of her babies: there would be twin boys. Each boy would represent a nation. Contrary to the usual order of authority, the elder boy would be subordinate to the younger.
 - 2) The twins were not identical. The elder boy looked older and stronger. He was red and covered with hair. The younger boy was not hairy.
 - 3) Their position in birth indicated their future lives. As the elder boy, who was named Esau (meaning “hairy one”) was born, the younger boy, Jacob, took hold of one of Esau’s heels with one hand. It appeared as if Jacob was trying to pass up Esau so that he could be the firstborn. Jacob means “supplanter.”
 - 4) The boys grew together and lived together. They, of course, had the same parents and a common grandfather, for Abraham was still alive. See Hebrews 11:9. Abraham died at the age of 175. This would have been when Jacob and Esau were 15 years old.
 4. There was a lack of firm, masculine spiritual control in the house. (This is the ugly mark upon the first landscape which pictures Rebekah and Isaac’s home.) Isaac was a Christian man, but he apparently did not do much toward training and directing his household.
 - 1) Isaac did not have the steadfast masculinity which he should have had.
 - 2) He had to be reprimanded for trying to deceive others concerning the relationship of Rebekah to himself. He told those of the Philistine country that Rebekah was his sister—thus committing the same sin as did his father, Abraham. Notice Genesis 26:1-11.
 - 3) He allowed his family to be “pushed around” because other men of the countryside did not want him to have the wells which he had dug. See Genesis 26:17-33. It was not until after

Isaac had built an altar that he settled down; then it was apparent to others around him that he could be strong.

II. THE PERIOD OF DIVISION. Notice Genesis 25:27-34. This picture has two separate parts to it—it is definitely divided down the middle, neither side is pretty. Rebekah is at the top of the one; Isaac is at the top of the other.

1. Isaac and Rebekah did not have equal love for both sons. Each chose a favorite son. As the boys were growing up, Isaac loved Esau, and Rebekah loved Jacob.
 - 1) It seems as if this love grew not out of what good traits had been developed through wise parental training, but out of personalities that just developed of themselves. Isaac loved Esau because Esau could bring home wild game for which he had hunted and which he could prepare into a delicious dish. Rebekah loved Jacob because he liked to stay at home.
 - 2) The training which the parents gave their boys included only those things that would satisfy the fleshly desires. Esau was a cunning hunter and could please his father with his skill. Jacob was skilled in tasks around the house. Neither was trained to be a well-rounded Christian man.
 - 3) Parents are commanded by God to bring up their children in the way which they should go. See Proverbs 22:6. Every person is born in sin, and if there are to be any good character and spiritual qualities in his life, there has to be constant training to achieve these traits. Isaac's training did not include instructions to tell others, perhaps, how to live.
2. The sons had entirely different interests and ambitions from each other.
 - 1) Esau, the firstborn, did not care about fulfilling any responsibilities. He was interested in hunting and in taking care of his bodily appetites. Esau, as the firstborn son, possessed the birthright. The birthright belonged to the eldest son of any family. He would become the spiritual leader as well as the judge and the decision-maker for the entire family upon the death of his father. Thereafter, as long as the eldest son lived, he would remain the head of the family and of the tribe. Of all the goods of his father, he would receive twice as much as any other son in the family. Hebrews 12:16 describes Esau as being profane and a fornicator.
 - 2) Jacob wanted the birthright. Perhaps he knew of the prophecy which God had made to Rebekah before the birth of the twins. He might have been watching for his chance to get it away from his brother. He obviously did not think about the fact that God's good ends should never be reached by bad means.
 - 3) The birthright was sold to Jacob. One day, after Esau had been hunting in the field, he came in very hungry. He saw a pot of thick red soup which Jacob had boiling on the stove. He begged for some of the delicious red soup. (From this incident Esau got his second name—Edom, which means "red.") Jacob would not give him any until he had sworn that the birthright would be transferred to him. Esau sold his birthright, receiving as payment some red soup which was served with bread. Esau despised his birthright; he considered it as distasteful and even worthless, something of no value to him.

III. THE PERIOD OF BREACH. Notice Genesis 27:1-46. (This picture shows only ugly smears of red and black, representing the lives of Esau and Jacob, two men who were allowed to live only for themselves and who were controlled by their desires to satisfy passions and pride.)

1. Esau had established a home with two wives, both of whom were of the Hittites. This was a sorrow to both his parents, but he did not know their feelings in the matter. Notice Genesis 26:34, 35; 28:6-9.
2. Isaac wanted to give the place of blessing to Esau.
 - 1) Isaac became an old man. In his old age he was blind.
 - 2) Isaac called Esau to prepare for receiving his father's blessing. He told Esau to go into the field and to kill with his bow and arrows a wild animal, dress it, and then bring the delicious venison so that Isaac might eat of it. After eating of this savoury meat, Isaac would then invoke God's blessing upon Esau. (Venison, as well as meaning "deer meat," also means "the edible flesh of a wild animal taken in hunting.")
 - 3) Rebekah realized Isaac's intentions. She overheard the conversation between Esau and his father when Isaac told Esau to prepare to receive the blessing.

3. Rebekah devised plans to put Jacob into the place of blessing.
 - 1) She told Jacob to get two goats from the flock. She would prepare a dish that tasted like the dish that Esau would prepare for his father. She would cover Jacob's hands and neck with the skins of the goats and would provide Esau's clothing for Jacob to wear so that Jacob could go in and make his father think that Esau had come to receive the blessing.
 - 2) Jacob deceived his father into thinking that he was Esau. Jacob lied several times, even using God's name in support of his lies.
 - 3) Jacob received his father's blessing that was given in the name of the Lord. Isaac pronounced that Jacob would be the ruler over his family, he would be blessed with material prosperity and possessions, everyone who blessed him would be blessed and everyone who would curse him would be cursed.
4. Isaac and Esau learned of the trickery.
 - 1) It was after Esau had returned from hunting. See Genesis 27:30-38. It was soon after Jacob had left his father's presence that Isaac realized his mistake in blessing the wrong boy. Isaac could bless Esau, but not with the same blessing which God had given to Abraham to be passed to Isaac and on to the next chosen one. Esau wept!
 - 2) Esau vowed to kill his brother. Notice Genesis 27:38-42. Even though Esau wept and begged, Isaac could not reverse the blessing which he had given to Jacob, because it had been given before God.

IV. THE PERIOD OF GLEANING THE RESULTS. See Genesis 27:41-46. (This last picture in our art gallery is absolutely dismal!)

1. The brothers hated and feared each other.
 - 1) Esau declared his intention of killing his brother. He said that he had been tricked out of his birthright, and now he had been tricked out of his father's prime blessing.
 - 2) Rebekah heard of Esau's intentions toward Jacob. She hurried to warn Jacob.
 - 3) Jacob feared Esau. He decided to take his mother's advice, run away from home and find refuge in the home of Rebekah's family.
2. Jacob had to leave home.
 - 1) Isaac agreed to allow Jacob to leave home. Rebekah convinced him that it was time for Jacob to marry. Jacob should not marry any of the Canaanite women, as Esau had done. He should travel to her father's home to choose a suitable wife.
 - 2) Esau thus learned for the first time from which group of people his wife should come.
3. Rebekah never saw her son, Jacob, again. (She had said that if there were to be any curse pronounced upon her son for his trickery, that it should fall upon her.) She died before he returned home.

CONCLUSION: Jacob and Esau had certainly not developed into the persons which they should have. They were both living for self, occupying themselves with only those occupations which pleased them. It appears that they did not one time concern themselves with whether they were fulfilling God's purpose for their lives. As a consequence, both their lives were shallow and full of iniquity!