



Lesson 17

JACOB AND ESAU

Story Elements

- **TEXT:** Gen. 25:1-11; 19-34
- **Setting:** circa 2000 B.C.
- **Main Characters:** God, Jacob, and Esau
- **Plot:** The twins born to Isaac and Rebekah are destined to be rivals.
- **Key word(s):** "...the _____ shall serve the _____." (v 23)
- **Climax:** *Genesis 25:31 And Jacob said, Sell me this day thy birthright.*

Birthright Defended

- 1) (vv 1-6) Though Ishmael was Abraham's firstborn, and though Abraham had other sons through a concubine named Keturah¹ (cf. 1 Chron. 1:32), it was through Isaac that the covenant with God would be established. Because of this, Abraham was careful to protect Isaac's _____ by sending the other sons away as soon as they were of age (along with a generous patrimony).
- 2) (vv 7-10) Abraham died in the "good old age" of _____ years of age. He was buried in the cave of Machpelah, where Sarah had been buried.

Birthright Despised

- 3) (vv 19-21) Like his mother Sarah, Isaac's wife Rebekah was _____. But Isaac "entreated the LORD for his wife...and the LORD was entreated of him, and Rebekah his wife conceived."
- 4) (v 22) As Rebekah's pregnancy progressed, she was concerned by the extraordinary amount of commotion there was within her womb.
 - a) She prayed to God and asked, "If it be so, why am I thus?" or: "has my blessing become a _____?"
 - b) (v 23) God's answer to Rebekah was an ominous prophecy: "Two _____ are in thy womb, and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels." Not only is this a prophecy of the the Edomites and the Israelites but also the distinction between the saved and the unsaved. Matthew Henry notes: "The seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent have been contending ever since the enmity was put between them."² (cf. Gen. 3:15; Rom. 9:7-11)
- 5) (vv 24-26) The babies were born.

¹ Most Bible scholars agree that Keturah became a concubine while Sarah was still alive. The story is relayed in the order it is to give a summing up of Abraham's life and to describe his careful protection of Isaac's estate.

² Henry, Matthew. *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume*. Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994. Print.

- a) Esau, red and _____, was born first. His name means “made” or “handled,” which seems to have been chosen on account of his looking, literally, like a little man (“already made”).
- b) Jacob was born second, but not without a fight – he came into the world holding onto his brother’s heel. The name Jacob means “_____ snatcher” or “supplanter.”
- 6) (vv 27-28) As the boys grew, their differences became more pronounced:
- a) Esau became a skilled _____ and the favorite of his father Isaac.
- b) Jacob preferred _____ life and was the favorite of his mother.
- 7) (vv 29-30) One day, after returning from an excursion in the field, Esau was so hungry that he grew faint. He asked for some of the _____ pottage (lentil soup) that Jacob had made.
- 8) (v 31) Jacob offered Esau food, but only in exchange for his birthright. The birthright was a special privilege owned by the firstborn son; it entitled him to a _____ inheritance (Deu. 21:17) and the right to be the family chief and priest (Exo. 4:22).
- 9) (vv 32-34) Esau agreed to the price and justified his squandering by exaggerating his fatigue as being “at the point to _____.” Now Jacob, the younger of the brothers, had legal possession of the elder brother’s birthright.

Application

- 10) It is said of Esau that he “despised his birthright.”
- a) To despise something is to have a low view of it. Esau despised what he should have viewed as _____.
- b) Esau’s selling his birthright for a bowl of chili is an example of _____. The Bible calls Esau “profane” in Heb. 12:16. Profane or worldly living is elevating the temporal things of this life above the eternal treasures.
- 11) In Romans 9:7-11, Paul uses Jacob and Esau as an illustration of election.
- a) Election is not based on _____, i.e., the children of flesh are not the children of God. (Rom. 9:8)
- b) Election is not based on our good _____ because God chose Jacob before he and his brother were born. (Rom. 9:11)
- c) Election is according to the _____ of God.

Romans 9:11 (For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;)

Answer Key

“Key word(s): “elder; younger” | 1. birthright | 2. 175 | 3. barren | 4. a) curse; b) nations | 5. a) hairy; b) heel | 6. a) outdoorsman; b) domestic | 7. red | 8. double | 9. die | 10. a) sacred; b) worldliness | 11. a) parentage; b) works; c) purposes