
Day 11 - January 11

Period of the Patriarchs (2100 -1525 BCE)

Abraham Marries Keturah

Death of Abraham

Last Account of Ishmael

Esau and Jacob

A Birthright is Sold

Isaac Follows in Abraham's Footsteps

Readings: *Genesis 25:1-26:33*

Reflections:

- The story of Abraham taking another wife is most likely a side note from the past rather than something that happened after Sarah died, even though it is listed after she died. This conclusion is based on the record of all the children he had. It is like, "Oh yes, he also had another wife named Keturah, and these were the kids he had with her." In the time of multiple wives, a lesser wife would not get much mention.
- The key statement here is that Isaac gets everything, while the other wives, concubines and their children just get gifts. This doesn't seem fair but it shows how the blessing flowed through Isaac.
- Dying at one hundred and seventy five is a good old age! Again we see unnaturally long lives recorded. Did they count differently or is there another natural explanation based on the health of the human DNA?
- Just as Israel will have twelve tribes Ishmael has twelve descendents. The key statement is that they lived in hostility toward all their brothers. This rivalry and warring has been proven over the centuries. The Islamic Arabic nation sees themselves as the descendents of Ishmael.
- The pairings continue with the twins, Esau and Jacob. The key insight from the prophecy of their birth is that the older will serve the younger. This fits in line with the stronger serving the weaker, the wiser serving the more foolish, the richer serving the poorer. This becomes a key aspect of the kingdom. Jacob grasping the heel is a visual portrayal of his character,

that he is one always struggling to get what he wants or needs. He is someone who is fighting and clinging to get ahead or keep up.

- Esau is characterized as a real man's man, a daddy's boy where Jacob is characterized as a mommy's boy. Jacob is not easy to like. At first the hearers of this story would be naturally drawn to Esau. Yet, Esau's heart is not right. Jacob values his birthright and the birthright of the oldest where Esau despises it. So it is passed to Jacob for a bowl of soup. Seizing the moment shows Jacob's shrewdness and Esau being controlled by his passions. This is a reminder that our passions can deceive us. As Hebrews 12:16-17 warns, "See that no one is sexually immoral, or is godless like Esau, who for a single meal sold his inheritance rights as the oldest son. Afterward, as you know, when he wanted to inherit this blessing, he was rejected. He could bring about no change of mind, though he sought the blessing with tears." It is possible to make one foolish mistake based on sinful self-indulgence that has a huge impact on your life. Even in light of all that God can do through Jesus to redeem our sinful mistakes we are still warned of the potential for lasting consequences by the writer of Hebrews.
- In this passage we find another important kingdom insight: God often works through people we least expect. Saul was in many ways the perfect king for Israel, but had a bad heart. He was a strong, powerful and charismatic leader that stood head and shoulders over all others. David was easily passed over by other people but had a good heart and was chosen by God, even though he was capable of great sin. Esau is the obvious leader here but his heart is wrong. Jacob is the last person you feel like cheering for, but somewhere inside, his heart was passionate for God. God passes over the eldest to work through Jacob. Don't look at the outward appearance of anyone or anything. Look at the heart. See what God sees and place your value on what God values.
- The repeated story of Abimelech shows one of two things. Either this is the case of "like father, like son" or the oral tradition has once again repeated itself. The term Abimelech is most like a ruling title, like Pharaoh, and so it probably isn't the same person as Abraham encounters.
- God blesses Isaac even though he sins in the same way his father sinned. It is striking how much fear these men had around being married to beautiful women. It obviously was a life and death issue. We see the contrast between trusting God to save you versus trying to be your own saviour and the cost that has on those you love.
- The wells they dug show the Lord's provision and supply in a barren land. God keeps helping them open up wells to ensure that their needs are met. The Lord again appears to Isaac to affirm his blessing on him and his descendents. The oath with Abimelech again shows God's protection and blessing. Lesson of the day: God takes care of those he loves. He will meet all their needs according to his riches (Philippians 4:19).