

Genesis 25, The Beginning of Hope in the Promises of God: A Life of Abraham, Preached by Michael Gunn @ Harambee Church on April 27th, 2008

“Do you feel more loved because God makes much of you, or because at the cost of His Son, He enables you to enjoy making much of him forever? Does your happiness hang on seeing the cross of Christ as a witness to your worth, or as a way to enjoy God’s worth forever? Is God’s glory in Christ the foundation of your gladness?”

John Piper

Intro:

We come to the end of our study in the life of Abraham. We have seen God journey with Abraham and build his faith along the way, and in our passage today we see Abraham dying, and the covenant being continued through Isaac and Rebekah., and then through Jacob and Esau.

From the Head...

In verse one we see Abraham taking another wife, and birthing at least six more children to his new wife Keturah. The word “Took is actually “Had took” which suggests that this happened before and is only being mentioned now. It does seem that Keturah is a concubine (**1 Chronicles 1:32** and **Genesis 25:6**), and she probably had these children when Sarah was alive. We aren’t told much about her or the other children, because the line to Christ, the Messiah, is through Isaac. What we do know is that many of these sons became some of the fringe tribes that Israel deals with throughout the OT (The Midianites, etc.). Also Abraham gave most of his inheritance to Isaac, but gave each of his other children (Including any children he had with concubines) gifts in order to sustain them, and then he moved them East (Which is toward Iran/Iraq, Jordan (Ammonites) and Saudi Arabia. Abraham’s final work included making sure that Isaac was the clear heir that the promise was working through.

The passage goes on to talk about Abraham’s death, and notes only a few things. First, that he lived a “Full” life, expressing both the number of his years as well as, the quality of it. Secondly, that he was buried by Isaac and Ishmael in the same cave (Machpela) that Sarah was buried in¹, and lastly that “*God blessed Isaac.*” The question is why? In this passage we see three incidents where God seems to choose one group/person over another. **First**, as we just saw, God blessed Isaac over Ishmael. **Secondly**, in verses 12-18 we see God graciously fulfilling His promise to Abraham and Hagar in regards to Ishmael (**Genesis 16**). We are told the names of Ishmael’s sons, but their story seems to end in relative anonymity². However the rest of the story and many subsequent chapters after this one deal with two specific sons of Isaac and Rebekah; Jacob and Esau, which leads to the **third** time God appears to choose one over the other, when verse 23 says, “*The one shall be stronger than the other, the older shall serve the younger.*” Romans 9 gives us some very specific commentary on this. In spite of us having incredibly hard times believing some of these passages, we can’t ignore that they exist. What is interesting here is that like Sarah, Rebekah was barren for 20 years before she conceived Isaac. Once again, this story is saturated with God’s sovereign hand in our creation and our salvation.

God continually appears as the sovereign one here, which leads us back to the question why again? Again Romans 9 attempts to answer this question, but I would also say that the story we have unfolded in these past 12 chapters also helps us understand. The answer may be as simple as the gospel is more about God and His glory than it is for our own glory. God blessed Isaac, because He had chose this line of Abraham to be the line that would one day produce the Messiah, who would be the ultimate blessing because of His work on the cross for our sins. God is sovereignly ensuring the completion of His story for His glory and the ultimate blessing of all the nations! God is not enslaved to our choices. It is important to note that the moral difference between Jacob and Esau is not a factor. It is Jacob who is the swindler³ who ends up swindling his older brother of his birthright, yet God uses Jacob to carry on the line to the Messiah. Ironically we see Jacob using his conniving nature (Along with the conniving of his mother Rebekah; **Genesis 37**) to assure this ascent.

...to the Heart

We have just finished our study of Abraham, and hopefully have seen that God uses ordinary people for extraordinary tasks. Abraham was a pagan moon god worshipper when God pulled him out of his environment, and placed him in a different land to begin a new nation that would consummate with the coming Messiah to take on our sins on the cross so that we could passionately worship God, which is why we are created. Our story ends with Isaac and his dysfunctional

¹ “*Gathered to his people*” is not just a physical meaning. It also means that his soul was gathered with them in the afterlife.

² In spite of this anonymity the promise to make Abraham the father of many nations become a reality from these sons. We also see that the prophecy that Ishmael would be “*A wild donkey of a man*” and that “*He shall dwell over against all his kinsmen*” (Genesis 16:12), had come true (**Genesis 25:18**).

³ In spite of the fact that the name Jacob means “God protects,” there is an older meaning “He clutches at the heel” or “He cheats or competes.”

family carrying on the line of Jesus. God graciously calls and redeems sinful people to transform them as sinners saved by grace, so that we'd see our birthright (Significance, worth, identity) in Him alone.

Books for further study: *Genesis*, Walter Brueggemann, *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament: Genesis*, Victor P. Hamilton, *Genesis*, Bruce Waltke, *The Word Biblical Commentary: Genesis*, Gordon J. Wenham, *The NIV Application Commentary: Genesis*, John H. Walton, *Creation and Blessing*, Allen P. Ross

Next Weeks Verses: Selected verses

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