

## Genesis Chapters 27-28 – John Karmelich

1. There is a verse in the New Testament that will have a whole new meaning before this lesson is done. It is: “By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau in regard to their future.” (Heb 11:20 NIV)
  - a) Unless you are very familiar with either Hebrews 11:20 or this chapter, you may read that verse in Hebrews and shrug your shoulders. All that verse says is that Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau about their future.
  - b) Before I analyze that verse to death, ☺ lets talk the events of Chapter 27. For the most part it is not good:
    - i) Isaac decides to give the first-born blessing to his son Esau, despite the fact that God told Rebekah many years ago that his brother Jacob is the “greater” son and is next in the messianic line.
    - ii) Isaac’s wife Rebekah carefully plans a false scheme to deceive her husband.
    - iii) Jacob directly lies to his going-blind father and deceives Isaac. He pretends to be his brother Esau and gets the false blessing.
    - iv) After Isaac blesses Jacob, who he thought was Esau, Isaac does not rescind the blessing, nor scold Jacob for the deception. Essentially he says, “what is done is done” and then after Esau finds out, Jacob gives him a smaller blessing.
    - v) Which leads back to Hebrews 11:20. This chapter is all about deception. Despite that, Isaac is mentioned “in positive light” in Hebrews Chapter 11 for this blessing.
    - vi) Hebrews Chapter 11 is all about positive examples of faith in God. It is about having hope in an eternal future that cannot be seen. How is all of this deception here in Chapter 27 “positive” in regards to this blessing?
    - vii) I believe the answer is that once Isaac knew he was deceived, he didn’t rebuke Jacob nor change his mind about the blessing. Isaac knew that God wanted Jacob to be “more special” than Esau and Isaac was rebelling against God in wanting to bless Esau over Jacob. The fact that Isaac did not rescind the blessing of Jacob after the deception is exactly why it was mentioned in the Book of Hebrews.
    - viii) Confused? Good! By the time we get through the chapter, this introduction might make more sense! What I want you to comprehend in this introduction is that despite the sins committed in this chapter:
      - a) Isaac “realized” his mistakes and took action to complete God’s will. The fact that he didn’t rescind the blessing to Jacob despite the deception made Isaac realize his own faults. He did the right thing at that point.
      - b) The other main thing to get out of this chapter is God’s will being done despite the sins and faults we do. There are consequences for those sins, and we will read about them in this chapter. The point is we don’t have to worry about God’s will getting or not getting accomplished. The only question for us is whether or not we choose to be used by God in that process of getting his will done.
2. In comparison to all of Genesis, this section might be the “low point” of human history.
  - a) We don’t read anywhere in this section of God speaking or God blessing anyone.
  - b) It is all about sin, deception, lying and outright rebellion against God.
  - c) The amazing thing about this section is the fact that God “picked” these people to accomplish His will despite their error’s. I once remember radio commentator Dennis Praeger stating, “God picked the biggest bunch of losers to be his chosen people”. (Dennis is a devout Jewish bible teacher.) His point is that God does not pick people because they are superior to others. He uses common people with lots of faults. Their faults are listed for us to see in plain view. Despite their and our best efforts to mess up, God still loves them and uses them to get His will accomplished.

3. Chapter 27, Verse 1: When Isaac was old and his eyes were so weak that he could no longer see, he called for Esau his older son and said to him, "My son." "Here I am," he answered. <sup>2</sup> Isaac said, "I am now an old man and don't know the day of my death. <sup>3</sup> Now then, get your weapons--your quiver and bow--and go out to the open country to hunt some wild game for me. <sup>4</sup> Prepare me the kind of tasty food I like and bring it to me to eat, so that I may give you my blessing before I die."
- a) I have to admit, I thought about these verses more than the rest of this chapter combined. It bothered me to no end that Isaac would want to bless Esau over Jacob.
- i) Isaac told Esau to go hunt some wild game for him and make him some stew.
  - ii) You can't read this and think about how Esau gave up his birthright for a "pot of stew". It is almost as if one sin followed the other.
  - iii) Maybe Isaac was very hungry at this point. Maybe Isaac thought that Esau was "more of the hunter" while his brother Jacob was more of the "stay-at-home" type that Isaac wanted to bless him, figuring Esau was stronger.
  - iv) In my last lesson, I talked about the word-picture of "twins in the womb" and one can either "feed the spirit" and "that twin" gets stronger or "feed the flesh" and "that twin" gets stronger. That same word-picture gets seen when Esau gives up his birthright for "food" and Isaac is willing to rebel against God's plan for "food". In both cases, we have a word picture of rebellion against God by focusing on human needs over God's will for us.
- b) I stopped wrestling with these verses when I simply came to the conclusion that even the "chosen believers in God" still rebel at times.
- i) In Genesis 25:23, God spoke directly to Rebekah and told her that the "younger son (Jacob) would rule over the older son (Esau)". Personally, when God speaks to me, I would have a tough time keeping that a secret from my spouse. ☺ I can't prove it, but I suspect Rebekah told her husband about how God spoke to him.
  - ii) Just two verses ago (end of Chapter 26) spoke of how Esau married two local Hittite women and how this was a source of grief to Isaac and Rebekah.
  - iii) In Chapter 25, we read of how Esau sold his birthright to Jacob. It doesn't say that Jacob told this to his father, but if Jacob was going to have the birthrights, then he must have told of this event to his parents.
    - a) I stated in the last lesson of what is the birthright. Here is a reminder:
    - b) The first-born son is to have a double-share of the parent's inheritance over all other brothers. He is also to be the "family administrator" and in charge of family decisions. He is also to be "high priest" of the family and is suppose to pray to God on the family's behalf. (The specific bible verses tied to these rights are listed in the previous lesson.)
  - iv) So if Esau sold his birthright to Jacob two chapters ago, what's going on here? ☺
    - a) The closest example I can think of is a "verbal-last will and testament" combined with a prophecy of the children's future.
    - b) The "earlier" birthright was about being the religious leader of the family and getting a double-portion of the family inheritance.
    - c) This blessing is more about, "I am dying and here is what is in store for your future". It is not about money, but about affirmation as a loved son. It is prophetic for the future as well as describing the son itself.
- c) Back to the question of "Why would Isaac do this?" I started thinking about my own life. Despite the fact I am zealous for my relationship with God and "do all the things a good Christian supposed to", I still have times where I sin and turn against God. That "sin-nature" is still inside all of us.

- i) God never says, “You are born-again, and you will never sin again”. When Jesus died for our sins, it is not just those sins committed up to the moment we became born-again, it is also for those we will commit for the rest of our lives. Again, it doesn’t excuse the sin, it is just a reminder that we are saved despite our actions.
  - ii) Isaac is in heaven. God saved him for all eternity despite the actions we read about in this chapter. There is no mention of Isaac confessing his sins. The only “clue” of Isaac’s repentance is that he did not rescind the blessing he gave to Jacob even after Isaac knew he was deceived.
  - iii) If you are placing your trust in Jesus, we too can “mess up as bad as Isaac” and still be saved. Again there are consequences for those sins. We have rewards in heaven based on our faithfulness. One can debate over whether you can lose your salvation by renouncing your faith in Jesus. I don’t believe you can ever lose your salvation because you “sinned too much”. As long as you are trusting in Jesus and at the same time, making a regular effort to confess and try to live the life God desires you to live, we are saved.
- d) Let’s get back to this paragraph. Isaac thought he was about to die at this time.
- i) Martin Luther is crediting with calculating Isaac’s age at this point of being 137. It would take me half a page to explain the details, but Luther took about a half-dozen scriptures that mention the age of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob at different points in their life and figured out Isaac was 137 at this point.
  - ii) Back in Genesis 25:17, It said that Isaac’s brother Ishmael was 137 when he died. Remember Ishmael was 13-14 years older than Isaac. Isaac may have been thinking, “If my brother lived to be 137, and now I’m 137, my time may be up”.
  - iii) When we get to Chapter 35, we are going to read that Isaac doesn’t die until he was 180. (Genesis 35:28). The point is we don’t know when our life is done.
  - iv) If Isaac was 137, that means that Jacob and Esau were 77.
    - a) Remember that Isaac was married when he was 40 (Genesis 25:20) and didn’t have these twin sons until 20 years later. (Genesis 25:26). If one deducts 60 years from 137 (age of Isaac now), that means the twin sons Jacob and Esau were 77 at this time.
  - v) If you’re wondering how they lived so long, you have to go back to the “flood chapters” of Genesis. Before the flood there was a water/ice canopy over the earth that prevented ultraviolet rays from coming to the earth. That explained the long lifespan. After the flood, the lifespan of man shorted through the centuries. By the time we get to Moses, roughly 400 years later, he “only” lives to about 120. By the next few generations, we get the normal lifespan that think of today.
4. Verse 5: Now Rebekah was listening as Isaac spoke to his son Esau. When Esau left for the open country to hunt game and bring it back, <sup>6</sup> Rebekah said to her son Jacob, "Look, I overheard your father say to your brother Esau, <sup>7</sup> 'Bring me some game and prepare me some tasty food to eat, so that I may give you my blessing in the presence of the LORD before I die.' <sup>8</sup> Now, my son, listen carefully and do what I tell you: <sup>9</sup> Go out to the flock and bring me two choice young goats, so I can prepare some tasty food for your father, just the way he likes it. <sup>10</sup> Then take it to your father to eat, so that he may give you his blessing before he dies."
- a) Let me summarize the paragraph: Rebekah overheard Isaac planning to bless Esau. She remembered how God promised to bless Jacob instead. Therefore, she devises this plot to make Jacob look like his brother Esau and lie to his father. (Doesn’t this sound like an episode of “I Love Lucy”? ☺)
    - i) Notice what Rebekah and Jacob do not do: Pray! Further, there is no mention of Rebekah even telling her husband Isaac something like, “What you’re doing is wrong!” There is no mention of praying to God to intercede to stop Isaac.

- ii) In fact, you can't find any mention of prayer or God interceding in this chapter. One characteristic of God is that he never intercedes in our life without us asking him to. God waits for us to "mess up" and then ask for forgiveness before He steps back in. God gives us the freewill to mess up, and he "stands back" and allows it to happen.
  - iii) One of the great lessons of this chapter is "two wrongs don't make a right". You can't get back in the will of God by doing "more sin" to correct others that were made. I guarantee if that if Rebekah and Jacob didn't do this scheme, God would have found some other way to get Jacob "blessed" over Esau.
- b) One has to stop and think how much effort went into this deception:
- i) Jacob was smooth-skinned and Esau was hairy. Rebekah had to make goat skins in a way it made his brother's arms look hairy. (The goats of that location have hair that is still used today as a human hair substitute.)
  - ii) Further, she had to make a stew that tasted like the one that Isaac asked Esau to make and accomplish all of this before Esau gets home.
  - iii) The text spends a lot of time emphasizing the fact that Rebekah was doing the work. Further, this chapter goes "out of its way" to tell us about the family relationships. There is a constant mention of the words: "son, mother, brother, etc.) as to remind us of "who is who" and how they are related. The emphasis seems to be that "sin is spreading" through the family.
    - a) Isaac was sinning by wanting to bless Esau.
    - b) His wife Rebekah was sinning by planning this deception.
    - c) Jacob will sin by lying directly to his father and going along with his mother's plans.
    - d) I talked earlier about the first born son being the spiritual leader of the family. In this chapter, we see a pattern of sin "entering the whole family" A lesson for us heads-of households to learn is that when we personally sin, it can "spread" to our entire household.
5. Verse 11: Jacob said to Rebekah his mother, "But my brother Esau is a hairy man, and I'm a man with smooth skin. <sup>12</sup> What if my father touches me? I would appear to be tricking him and would bring down a curse on myself rather than a blessing." <sup>13</sup> His mother said to him, "My son, let the curse fall on me. Just do what I say; go and get them for me."
- a) Notice what Jacob does not say: "You know mom, did it ever occur to you that all of this is wrong? ☺ We trust in God and are chosen by Him. Why don't we just approach dad and tell him of his sin and how God said I was to rule over my brother Esau?"
  - b) Jacob only focused on the danger of being caught. There is no sense of sorrow or "what I'm doing is wrong", just of being caught.
  - c) Rebekah's response to Jacob's question is also interesting: "Let the curse fall on me".
    - i) As I stated earlier, "two wrongs can't make a right". There is no justifying this action. Rebekah did suffer for this action. This action caused Jacob to have to run for his life. She would never see him again.
6. Verse 14: So he (Jacob) went and got them (goats) and brought them to his mother, and she prepared some tasty food, just the way his father liked it. <sup>15</sup> Then Rebekah took the best clothes of Esau her older son, which she had in the house, and put them on her younger son Jacob. <sup>16</sup> She also covered his hands and the smooth part of his neck with the goatskins. <sup>17</sup> Then she handed to her son Jacob the tasty food and the bread she had made.
- a) Notice the text emphasizes how much Rebekah was involved in this deception. Her heart was in the right place, but God never intends for us to get His will done by deception.
  - b) When one gets to the book of Exodus and Leviticus, you will read how goats are associated with sin. The goat is associated with sin, and ties back to this deception with the goat-hair used by Jacob.

- i) In Leviticus Chapter 16, there is a once a year ceremony where the sins of the Jewish people are placed on a goat and the goat is set free. It is a word-picture of God forgiving the sins and the sins being “removed” from the people.
    - ii) In Exodus 25 & 35 one of the roof-materials used in the tabernacle was goat’s hair. It is a word picture of how are “sins are covered” over us!
  - c) Notice all of the effort to deceive Isaac speaks of the “flesh”.
    - i) They made “tasty food” to appease his appetite. They dressed Jacob in Esau’s clothes and made fake-hair for Jacob’s body.
    - ii) We as Christians “wag our heads” at this deception and think, “Boy, are these people in trouble!” ☺ God did not intend for us to read these stories and think of ourselves as superior to Jacob and Rebekah. We too sin and we too rebel against God. We too, allow our sins to grow worse and worse in our deception. The application of these lessons is to remind ourselves that there is no justification for rebellion against God’s commandments. You cannot sin and have “good intentions” as an excuse.
7. Verse 18: He went to his father and said, "My father." "Yes, my son," he answered. "Who is it?"  
<sup>19</sup> Jacob said to his father, "I am Esau your firstborn. I have done as you told me. Please sit up and eat some of my game so that you may give me your blessing."
- a) Notice that Jacob lied to his father face to face. Don’t forget that this is a violation of one of the 10 commandments to “not bear false witness” (Exodus 20:16).
  - b) What “popped in my head” as I was reading this was that Isaac too once directly lied in order to save his life. In the last Chapter, (26), we read of Isaac lying about his wife (“she is my sister”) in order to save his life. Here, Isaac’s sins “were coming home to roost”.
    - i) I have found that God uses circumstances in our lives to remind us of past sins. Remember that God desires a healthy relationship with Him, and that means confession of past sins. I will often see God using present situations to remind us of things about our past. (I don’t know if Isaac “made this connection”, it is just something that I saw.)
8. Verse 20: Isaac asked his son, "How did you find it so quickly, my son?" "The LORD your God gave me success," he replied. <sup>21</sup> Then Isaac said to Jacob, "Come near so I can touch you, my son, to know whether you really are my son Esau or not."
- a) Jacob not only violated one of the 10 Commandments to “not bear false witness”, but he violated another of the Commandments to “not take God’s name in vein” (Exodus 20:7). Jacob used the name of God to lie about his finding the wild game in hunting.
    - i) When we think of “taking God’s name in vein”, we think of swearing in anger and invoking God’s name. What that Commandment really refers to is to use God’s name in a false situation. Remember that we are God’s witnesses. Therefore God takes it very seriously when we invoke His name in a false situation.
    - ii) Notice God does not come in and stop this from happening. God allows sin to occur even by those who are saved. It is only after we seek God’s forgiveness that He is willing to intercede.
9. Verse 22: Jacob went close to his father Isaac, who touched him and said, "The voice is the voice of Jacob, but the hands are the hands of Esau." <sup>23</sup> He did not recognize him, for his hands were hairy like those of his brother Esau; so he blessed him. <sup>24</sup> "Are you really my son Esau?" he asked. "I am," he replied.
- a) Verse 23 says “he blessed him”, but the blessing doesn’t begin until Verse 27. That statement in Verse 23 is an overview statement.
  - b) Remember Isaac was 137 and going blind. For the moment, “the trick worked”. One can argue that “God made Isaac blind” to this deception because Isaac willfully wanted to bless the wrong son.

10. Verse 25: Then he said, "My son, bring me some of your game to eat, so that I may give you my blessing." Jacob brought it to him and he ate; and he brought some wine and he drank.<sup>26</sup> Then his father Isaac said to him, "Come here, my son, and kiss me."
- One has to remember that the ritual of the blessing is different from the "birthright" that Jacob got a long time earlier. This is about the son seeking affirmation of approval from the father. Isaac loved Esau's cooking and used that interest to show approval to his son before the formal blessing.
  - Notice how Jacob brought wine too, in order to help the deception.
11. Verse 27: So he went to him and kissed him. When Isaac caught the smell of his clothes, he blessed him and said, "Ah, the smell of my son is like the smell of a field that the LORD has blessed."<sup>28</sup> May God give you of heaven's dew and of earth's richness-- an abundance of grain and new wine.
- Isaac smelled the body odor coming from Esau's clothes and that aroma was used to begin the blessing. The words of the blessing begin with the quote in Verse 27 and runs through the end of Verse 29.
  - The concept of the blessing is that of prophetic predictions about the future.
    - It applies initially to Jacob himself, but prophetically, also to his descendants.
    - The blessing of Verse 27-28 are saying essentially, "May God make you prosperous" in all you do. One has to remember that riches to this family was described in agricultural blessings.
    - It is also interesting to consider that neither Abraham, nor Isaac, nor Jacob owned any real estate other than the burial plot in the Promised Land. Therefore, the promise of the "richness of the land" has long term implications about the descendants of Jacob inheriting the Promised Land as well.
  - Its time for a personal application for all of this. This one is for father's: There are few things children want from their parents more than approval. This also applies as the children become adults. Children want to know that their parents are proud of them and what they have accomplished. This Jewish concept of the "blessing" is still used today among the Orthodox Jewish families. As a father, it doesn't mean I have to wait for God to give me a special prophetic message for my children. It is about complimenting them for what they have done and telling them how proud you are of them.
12. The blessing continues in Verse 29: May nations serve you and peoples bow down to you. Be lord over your brothers, and may the sons of your mother bow down to you. May those who curse you be cursed and those who bless you be blessed."
- Notice the word brothers in Verse 29: The verse says "Be lord (in charge) over your brothers". Jacob only had one brother. Therefore, this verse is intended to be read prophetically about the future generations after Jacob and Esau.
  - This verse is predicting that the children of Jacob, who would become the nation of Israel would rule over the decedents of Esau. Remember that Esau's nickname was Edom (Genesis 25:30). His decedents are the Edomites.
  - The last sentence of Verse 29 is similar to what God told Abraham: "I will bless those who bless you, And I will curse him who curses you." (Genesis 12:3a). I am sure Abraham repeated that statement to Isaac and now Isaac is repeating that statement to Jacob (who he thought was Esau).
13. Verse 30: After Isaac finished blessing him and Jacob had scarcely left his father's presence, his brother Esau came in from hunting.<sup>31</sup> He too prepared some tasty food and brought it to his father. Then he said to him, "My father, sit up and eat some of my game, so that you may give me your blessing."<sup>32</sup> His father Isaac asked him, "Who are you?" "I am your son," he answered, "your firstborn, Esau."<sup>33</sup> Isaac trembled violently and said, "Who was it, then, that hunted game and brought it to me? I ate it just before you came and I blessed him--and indeed he will be blessed!"
- Here is the climatic scene where Isaac realizes he was deceived by his own son.

- b) Notice in Verse 33 where it says, "Isaac trembled violently". He realized how much trouble his son Jacob had gone through to deceive him, and how Jacob had lied to his face.
  - c) This is the part that gets me:
    - i) Isaac did not call Jacob back in the room and scolded him.
    - ii) Isaac did not try to revoke the previous blessing and curse out Jacob.
    - iii) In fact, Isaac tells Esau, "indeed he will be blessed".
  - d) This leads back to the New Testament Verse I mentioned in the opening of this lesson:
    - i) "By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau in regard to their future." (Heb 11:20 NIV)
      - a) I believe it was at this moment in time that Isaac realized that Jacob was the son intended by God to be the greater son.
      - b) It may have been at this moment in time where Isaac recalled the prediction made to Rebekah about how the "younger son (Jacob) would rule over the older son (Esau)" mentioned in Genesis 25:23.
      - c) Again, none of these reasons excuse the deception performed by Rebekah and Jacob. You can't do "two wrongs make a right" with God. Both Rebekah and Jacob will suffer in other ways for their consequences. If this deception never happened, Jacob would still next in the messianic line.
    - ii) The fact that Isaac did not revoke the blessing is the secret behind Hebrews 11:20.
      - a) Isaac figured out God's will was being accomplished through this series of deceptions and lies. Isaac still trusted in God's plan to give the Promised Land to his descendants. It was at this moment in time Isaac realized the promise works through Jacob and Isaac didn't rescind the blessing.
14. Verse 34: When Esau heard his father's words, he burst out with a loud and bitter cry and said to his father, "Bless me--me too, my father!"
- i) You sort of envision Esau as this macho, outdoorsman, self-sufficient kind of guy. Here we read of him crying out loud.
  - b) One can see the life long bitter rivalry taking place between these two twins.
    - i) What Esau sought in the blessing is the desire to be thought of as superior to his brother Jacob.
    - ii) When Esau first entered the room a few verses back, He reminded his father that he is the "firstborn". It is a "shot" at his brother and a reminder that Esau never forgave or forgot how he gave up the "firstborn's" rights to his brother Jacob.
  - c) I talked in the last lesson and briefly in this one how Esau and Jacob are "word-pictures" of the internal struggle between fulfilling the "desires of the Spirit" versus the "desires of the flesh". The one that grows the strongest is the one you "feed the most".
  - d) Our old sin-nature refuses to die easily. It wants to be "blessed" as well as our spiritual nature. This verse is a word-picture of our old life "refusing to go out without a fight".
15. Verse 35: But he said, "Your brother came deceitfully and took your blessing." <sup>36</sup> Esau said, "Isn't he rightly named Jacob? He has deceived me these two times: He took my birthright, and now he's taken my blessing!" Then he asked, "Haven't you reserved any blessing for me?" <sup>37</sup> Isaac answered Esau, "I have made him lord over you and have made all his relatives his servants, and I have sustained him with grain and new wine. So what can I possibly do for you, my son?" <sup>38</sup> Esau said to his father, "Do you have only one blessing, my father? Bless me too, my father!" Then Esau wept aloud.
- a) You get the impression that the concept of the blessing is irrevocable. It doesn't matter that Jacob deceived the father to get it.
  - b) I may be "reaching" here, but what popped in my head is the fact that God's blessings to us are also irrevocable. Don't get me wrong, we cannot approach God in an insincere matter and get away with it. I do believe the word-picture of the "irrevocable blessing" is designed to be a reminder to us that God loves us unconditionally and intends to bless us despite our sinful nature. "Faith" is all about trusting in those future blessings.

- c) A couple of tidbits and we'll move on:
    - i) The name Jacob can mean "conniver or even deceiver". Jacob literally means "heal-catcher", but it implies a sinister connotation, as in a deceiver. It is as if at his birth, Jacob was named prophetically. That is why Esau made the statement, "Isn't he rightly named Jacob"?
    - ii) Next, notice Isaac told Esau: "I have made him lord over you and have made all his relatives his servants, and I have sustained him with grain and new wine."
      - a) The immediate meaning is that in Isaac's mind, Jacob is now in charge over Esau as long as Isaac is still alive. It also states that Isaac is making a prophetic proclamation about the future of both families.
    - iii) The last part of this paragraph is Esau asking for his blessing.
      - a) I suspect Esau is personally seeking his father's approval of his life and that is the tearful demand for a blessing. Verse 39 is Jacob's answer:
16. Verse 39: His father Isaac answered him, "Your dwelling will be away from the earth's richness, away from the dew of heaven above. <sup>40</sup> You will live by the sword and you will serve your brother. But when you grow restless, you will throw his yoke from off your neck."
- a) This blessing is future-generation-oriented in its prediction. Reading the rest of Genesis, there is no immediate reference to Jacob's family having dominance over Esau's family and then Esau's family successfully rebelling as stated in these two Verses.
  - b) However, when you read the future history of the Jewish people (sons of Jacob) and the Edomites (the sons of Esau) in the bible, this prediction literally becomes true:
    - i) Many Centuries later, King David conquered the Edomites and made them the slaves of the Israelites (Reference: 2<sup>nd</sup> Samuel 8:14).
    - ii) Isaac also told Esau that "you will throw his yoke from off your neck." Centuries after the Edomites became the slaves under King David the Edomites successfully revolted as recorded in 2<sup>nd</sup> Chronicles 21:8.
  - c) There is a prediction about Esau I should mention: The last prophet of the Old Testament, Malachi said, "Yet I have loved Jacob, but Esau I have hated" (Malachi 1:2a-3a, NIV)
    - i) First of all, it is amazing to read how God loved Jacob despite the deception we have read and will read about. This is based on God's pre-destined appointment of Jacob and the Nation of Israel, and further, about Jacob in the "born-again" aspect of how he trusted in the future promises of God.
    - ii) Next we read how Esau is "hated". The Edomites, (decedents of Esau) attacked the Jewish people at various points in history. Malachi and the Old Testament Prophet Obadiah focus on the long-term punishment of the Edomites.
      - a) There is another fulfillment as well. The first King Herod, who ruled around the time of Jesus' birth, was an Edomite. Not only did he attempt to kill Jesus-as-a-baby, but he was a horror to the Jewish people as well. He killed thousands of innocent people over his lifetime.
      - b) The rise of the Herod dynasty over the Israelites is another fulfillment of how Esau was told "you will throw his yoke from off your neck".
17. Verse 41: Esau held a grudge against Jacob because of the blessing his father had given him. He said to himself, "The days of mourning for my father are near; then I will kill my brother Jacob."
- a) Well, so much for Esau's willingness to be subservient to his brother. ☺
    - i) The prediction was that Esau would be ruled over by his brother. Esau was not exactly going along with his father's blessings.
  - b) Esau says to himself essentially, "Dad is dying. Out of respect for my father, I'll wait until he is dead before I go after my brother." Remember that Isaac will not die until he is 180 (Genesis 35:28) and therefore he lives another 43 years. One can read that as the grace of God preserving the life of Jacob.

18. Verse 42: When Rebekah was told what her older son Esau had said, she sent for her younger son Jacob and said to him, "Your brother Esau is consoling himself with the thought of killing you.  
<sup>43</sup> Now then, my son, do what I say: Flee at once to my brother Laban in Haran. <sup>44</sup> Stay with him for a while until your brother's fury subsides. <sup>45</sup> When your brother is no longer angry with you and forgets what you did to him, I'll send word for you to come back from there. Why should I lose both of you in one day?"
- a) Rebekah's price for her role in the deception is that she would die before ever seeing her favorite son again. The bible does not state that this was her punishment, just the fact that Jacob would be gone for many years and she would die before his return.
  - b) Rebekah says, "Why should I lose both of you in one day?"
    - i) She was afraid of losing Jacob by murder. If Esau did kill him, she would lose Esau as well as he would deserve capital punishment for the murder.
  - c) It is interesting to read this whole story from the perspective of God's will getting accomplished despite all of the deception, sin and plots to murder.
    - i) God intended for Jacob to go to Haran to get his wives. Jacob's 12 sons became the 12 tribes of Israel. All of this was "part of God's plan" despite the circumstances.
19. Verse 46: Then Rebekah said to Isaac, "I'm disgusted with living because of these Hittite women. If Jacob takes a wife from among the women of this land, from Hittite women like these, my life will not be worth living."
- a) The deception continues. Rebekah wanted Jacob to flee because of Esau and she uses the excuse of the "local Hittite women" to tell Isaac to tell Jacob to get a bride somewhere else.
    - i) Rebekah is telling her husband Isaac, "If my hometown was a good enough location for you to get a bride, its good enough for Isaac as well!" ☺
    - ii) Remember that Jacob was 77 at this time. He is way overdue to go get a woman! ☺
  - b) Remember the last two verses of Chapter 26 talked about how Esau took two Hittite wives and how that "grieved" his parents.
20. Chapter 28, Vs. 1: So Isaac called for Jacob and blessed him and commanded him: "Do not marry a Canaanite woman. <sup>2</sup> Go at once to Paddan Aram, to the house of your mother's father Bethuel. Take a wife for yourself there, from among the daughters of Laban, your mother's brother. <sup>3</sup> May God Almighty bless you and make you fruitful and increase your numbers until you become a community of peoples. <sup>4</sup> May he give you and your descendants the blessing given to Abraham, so that you may take possession of the land where you now live as an alien, the land God gave to Abraham." <sup>5</sup> Then Isaac sent Jacob on his way, and he went to Paddan Aram, to Laban son of Bethuel the Aramean, the brother of Rebekah, who was the mother of Jacob and Esau.
- a) Remember when Abraham wanted to get a wife for his son Isaac, Abraham sent his servant to the same house to get Rebekah. Now Isaac is sending Jacob himself. Abraham's reason had to do with Isaac shouldn't be allowed to leave the land.
    - i) Was Isaac "wrong" in sending Jacob himself?
    - ii) I believe each story is a separate word-picture. With Abraham/Isaac, it was about the Promised Land being promised to the descendants of Abraham. God didn't want Isaac to leave the land as a word-picture of a future promise.
    - iii) With the Isaac/Jacob story, we will have Jacob leaving the Promised Land alone, and returning with a large family and lots of possessions.
      - a) In a sense, this is a prediction of the future Exodus to/from Egypt.
      - b) With that in mind, look at Verse 3 again: "May God Almighty bless you and make you fruitful and increase your numbers until you become a community of peoples." That prediction came true. When Jacob returned, he had two wives, 12 kids and lots of material possessions.

- b) Let's get back to the New Testament verse of "By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau in regard to their future".
  - i) Notice what Isaac did not say to Jacob. "Listen you lying conniving kid, get out and don't come back until you've got a wife and some grandkids for me!" ☺
  - ii) Isaac blessed Jacob and predicted of a wonderful, positive trip for him.
  - iii) This is why I take the view that Isaac knew he was wrong about wanting to bless Esau in the first place and "forgave" the deception.
  - iv) Isaac loved both children unconditionally just as any father would. I believe Isaac understood God's intentions despite all of the sin and deception. The New Testament commends Isaac for blessing his children despite the lies and deceptions because Isaac understood God's redemptive plan, and that fact took priority in Isaac's mind over the sins and deceptions.
  - v) Think about when we sin and mess up. People also sin against us and hurt us. If we, for that moment, can get our focus on God's eternal plans and not how others hurt us, it can help us get through the moment as God intended for our lives. This is the idea of, "Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who have sinned against us". (Matthew 6:12) If we can see ourselves as sinners, the pain that others inflict on us isn't nearly as painful if we can focus on God's eternal plans for all of us.
- c) I read this paragraph again and I noticed something: Isaac never mentions himself in the blessing: He tells Jacob that he should have the "blessing given to Abraham".
  - i) It does not say, "the blessing given to Abraham and Isaac".
  - ii) The idea here is that unconditional promises were made to Abraham. Those promises are to be taught and passed on to the next generation.
- d) When you think about the lives of the twin brothers Jacob and Esau, neither one "really deserved" God's blessing. Esau rejected it and Jacob connived to get it.
  - i) It is almost as if "God picked the lesser of two evils." ☺
  - ii) The difference between the two is only that Jacob sought the blessing. Jacob is "justified" before God only because He sought a relationship with God.
  - iii) The application is God doesn't pick us based on our "worthiness". God is looking for people who desire to seek Him and are willing to let God work in their lives.

21. Verse 6: Now Esau learned that Isaac had blessed Jacob and had sent him to Paddan Aram to take a wife from there, and that when he blessed him he commanded him, "Do not marry a Canaanite woman," <sup>7</sup> and that Jacob had obeyed his father and mother and had gone to Paddan Aram. <sup>8</sup> Esau then realized how displeasing the Canaanite women were to his father Isaac; <sup>9</sup> so he went to Ishmael and married Mahalath, the sister of Nebaioth and daughter of Ishmael son of Abraham, in addition to the wives he already had.

- a) Esau saw that Jacob had obeyed his parents about traveling to his mother's family to go get a new wife. Esau also knew that his two Hittite wives didn't please his parents. So Esau figured, "I'll go get two more wives from my great-uncle Esau's family. That will make things better." Esau was trying to win back his father's approval.
  - i) (I'll tackle the concept of polygamy in the next lesson when Jacob gets two wives.)
- b) What is interesting to notice is the lack of any action on Isaac's part or God's part about Esau taking this action. You don't read, "Oh Esau, we're so proud of you, you are now taking a step in the right direction." You don't read, "I God forgive you for rejecting the birthright. Have a wonderful life with your four wives!" ☺ You don't read, "I, Esau accept that God choose my brother and I will now live my life as his servant in order to have eternal salvation!" ☺
  - i) If you spend your lifetime turning your back on God, you can't just "do some religious work" and think things are better with God. There is a mistaken notion among non-believers that God compares your "good points versus your bad points" when deciding your eternal salvation.

- ii) Salvation doesn't work that way! It is about committing your life to serve God. A "one time action" or a "once in a while" doesn't cut it. God is seeking those who are willing to fully commit their lives to him, not those who occasionally do a "religious" act in order to say, please their parents or their conscious.
- 22. Verse 10: Jacob left Beersheba and set out for Haran. <sup>11</sup> When he reached a certain place, he stopped for the night because the sun had set. Taking one of the stones there, he put it under his head and lay down to sleep. <sup>12</sup> He had a dream in which he saw a stairway resting on the earth, with its top reaching to heaven, and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it.
  - a) Here we have another fairly famous set of verses: The story of "Jacob's ladder".
    - i) The NIV says "stairway", but I will argue the word is better-translated "ladder".
  - b) Let's talk a little about the geography first. Haran is near Jerusalem, in Israel. It is a 400-mile journey to where he was going. He hasn't traveled very far yet.
  - c) The commentaries are full of speculation as to why Jacob used a rock as a pillow. If he is making this journey, you would think he would have some supplies that are much softer. The only thing the text says is when God speaks to him at this location, he takes the same stone and sets it as a "monument" to God (See Verse 22).
    - i) Some Christian commentators argue that the words "stone" and "rock" are metaphors for Christ "following and protecting" the Israelites where they go.
      - a) One can do an interesting study of the words "stone" and "rock" as it is used throughout the Old Testament and see a word-picture of Jesus.
      - b) Paul said, "They all ate the same spiritual food and drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ." (1st Corinthians 10:3-4, NIV)
      - c) Based on that verse, some argue that this rock that Jacob "rested upon" is a word-picture that ties to God's protection.
  - d) Now let's talk about the ladder (or stairwell). Jacob had a dream where he saw angels ascending and descending upon this ladder.
    - i) First of all, Jesus himself claims to be the "ladder" in this picture:
      - a) "I tell you the truth, you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man." (John 1:51 NIV).
      - b) Jesus claims that he is the "bridge" between God and man and the angels ascend and descend through Him! The statement in John was meant to be compared directly to Jacob's ladder.
  - e) So what is the purpose of this dream? What was it meant to teach Jacob and teach us?
    - i) As to Jacob, the next set of verses describe God speaking to Him. It is to show Jacob that God is at this location and that God is working in his life.
    - ii) An angel is a messenger from God. We usually find angels sent by God for a specific purpose and/or to deliver a specific message.
    - iii) You have to remember that this was a pretty low-time in Jacob's life. I'm sure the deception of his father is still fresh in his mind. He was afraid his brother might kill him. He's traveling 400 miles to a strange land to go find a wife. It was at this low moment that God choose to speak and assure Jacob he is there.
- 23. Verse 13: There above it stood the LORD, and he said: "I am the LORD, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac. I will give you and your descendants the land on which you are lying. <sup>14</sup> Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south. All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring. <sup>15</sup> I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you."
  - a) First notice what God does not say: "Jacob, you conniving, lying scumbag! You're lucky I don't wipe you off the face of the earth right now. Oh, and hey, good luck with the wife search. You're on your own kid! ☺ "

- b) Instead we read of God blessing Jacob!
  - i) A few pages I quoted the prophet Malachi saying, “Jacob have I loved and Esau have I hated”. (Malachi 1:2-3) This prophecy refers to the descendants of each person, and not so much the person themselves.
  - ii) The amazing thing is not that God hated Esau, but that God loved Jacob!
    - a) This comes back to the concept of God’s “pre-destiny”. Since God knows all things in advance, He knows how we are going to turn out in life. Since he has that knowledge, He “pre-chooses” some people. This is the idea behind the Christian concept of “pre-destiny”. It is meant to be balanced with the other concept of “free-will” from our perspective.
    - b) By the way, the concept of “hatred” here does not conflict with the God of love. The prophecy has to do with the actions of Esau and his decedents. To oversimplify God: God loves people and hates sins.
- c) So back to the question: Why does God choose to bless Jacob in this section? This paragraph essentially repeats much of the blessings given to Abraham.
  - i) First of all, the promises to the descendants of Abraham are unconditional. It does not matter how much Jacob was messing up. The point was after all of the conniving, he was obedient to his father Isaac to go get a bride from the “right family” and keep the Messianic line going. Further, he sought God’s birthright and blessing despite the rotten way Jacob went about getting it.
  - ii) What God wants us to remember from this story (this means pay attention ☺) is that God wants to bless us not because “we’re something special”. He wants to bless us because God desires to and nothing else, period. It has been said, “If God can justify Jacob, there is hope for the rest of us!” ☺ The point is if God can work through Jacob, he can pick any one of us and do the same thing. All God is looking for in believers is a willingness to trust in Him and do His will. Once you have accepted Jesus as payment for sin, God is looking for obedience out of gratitude for what God has done for our lives!
  - iii) Another reason God allowed the “rotten side” of Jacob to be exposed throughout history is to show the Promised land belongs to the descendants of Abraham, and Isaac and Jacob no matter how bad any one of those three messed up!
    - a) Some wrongly argue that the land belongs to all the descendants of Abraham. These verses show the land specifically belongs to the descendants only through Isaac and again, only through Jacob.

24. Verse 16: When Jacob awoke from his sleep, he thought, "Surely the LORD is in this place, and I was not aware of it." <sup>17</sup> He was afraid and said, "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God; this is the gate of heaven."
- a) In many ways, Jacob was immature in his faith toward God at this point. He didn’t comprehend that God can work at any location. I’m sure Jacob heard the stories from his father and grandfather about the Promised Land and how his descendants would inherit it. It was only after this repeated promise that it “sinks in”.
  - b) Many commentators argue that this is the time and spot where Jacob gets “saved”. It was his public acknowledgement of the God of Heaven and one can see his joy.
25. Verse 18: Early the next morning Jacob took the stone he had placed under his head and set it up as a pillar and poured oil on top of it. <sup>19</sup> He called that place Bethel, though the city used to be called Luz.
- a) Bethel means “House of God”. Luz means “almond” or “almond tree”. It also refers to a human backbone. It may be that this particular spot may have resembled a rocky spot that looked like a backbone. (Source: International Standard Bible Encyclopedia).

- b) The point is Jacob is so impressed with what happens, he renames the place so as to commemorate the event. When the Israelites entered the Promised Land over 400 years later, the new -name stuck.
    - i) Unfortunately, the location became known as a center of idolatry centuries later when the “Samaritan” religion was born. (See 1<sup>st</sup> Kings Chapter 12-13).
  - c) Personally, I just like the word picture of “oil poured upon the rock”. Oil is a word-picture associated with the Spirit of God. The “rock” as discussed, ties to Christ.
26. Verse 20: Then Jacob made a vow, saying, "If God will be with me and will watch over me on this journey I am taking and will give me food to eat and clothes to wear<sup>21</sup> so that I return safely to my father's house, then the LORD will be my God<sup>22</sup> and this stone that I have set up as a pillar will be God's house, and of all that you give me I will give you a tenth."
- a) Here Jacob makes a vow to God saying, “If you make this trip good, I’ll give you 10%”.
    - i) Notice the lack of any response by God. We don’t read of God saying “OK, Jacob you’ve got a deal. I really want you to worship me and I’ll settle for 10%”. ☺
    - ii) God doesn’t bargain. This set of verses is another reason I argue that Jacob is still “spiritually immature” at this point in his life.
    - iii) We can only come to God on His terms. His terms are to fully turn our life over to Him and accept Jesus payment as our sins. God doesn’t strike deals.
  - b) The first word of Jacob’s speech is the word “if”. This same word can also be translated “since”. Some people try to say that Jacob is not haggling with God, but just making a statement like “Since you are blessing me, I’ll give you 10% of what I get”. If you understand Jacob’s conniving nature, you realize the word “if” is the best translation.
27. Let’s wrap this up: These two chapters go start with willful disobedience to God by Isaac, deception and lying by Rebekah and Jacob, and end with God blessing Jacob and Jacob acknowledging God.
- a) The big-picture idea to see is that God works with us “as we are”. He takes a bunch of disobedient, lying, conniving people and matures them into great men of faith.
  - b) My key verse of this lesson is the Hebrews verse: “By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau in regard to their future”. That faith occurred despite of their sins. That blessing occurred despite their actions. These chapters are more reminders to us that God gets all the glory for our lives and not us. Our great “works” that we do are only due to God working through us and not our own abilities or accomplishments.
28. Let’s pray: Father, You have called us out of a life of rebellion to a life to serve you. Even after we are called, we too like the people we read about are disobedient. Help us to realize our shortcomings before you, so as to mature us in your image. Help us to remember it is all about You and not our own ego’s and desires. Guide us as we live to do your will. We ask this in Jesus name we pray, Amen.