

Well it seems that we are completely done with Abraham and we are going to move on and just touch on Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph with some very cryptic passages that to my surprise are actually packed with a lot of punch and depth in meaning. These verses were very hard to unfold, but I think you will find, as I did, that the Holy Spirit is amazing in His ability to communicate a whole lot with just a few words and a few old stories.

It does help, however, to be well versed in the original stories so I encourage you to be continually reading and studying. If you do I know that you will be amazed at what the Holy Spirit will show you even in the most esoteric of verses.

### ***Hebrews 11:20-22***

By faith Isaac invoked future blessings on Jacob and Esau.

To me this is one of the most curious of all the verses we are going to cover tonight because most of us are familiar with the shenanigans of Jacob and how he deceived his dad and stole Esau's blessing as well as his birthright; yet, it tells us that it was by faith that this blessing was given.

The story of Jacob and Esau is found in ***Genesis 25-33***. It is definitely worth the read. After Isaac had his experience on Mount Moriah (which we studied last week) we don't read of him anymore until suddenly he gets his wife. And in keeping with Isaac being a "type" of Jesus, that has some very curious implications. When Jesus rose from the dead, He went away and will not return until He has His bride—the church. It's fascinating typology.

Anyway, Isaac married Rebekah and soon thereafter became pregnant with twins. However, there was this odd struggle inside of her between the two kids; so we are told that she went to ask the Lord about it. So I take it there must have been some means in those days for her to inquire of the Lord. It is likely she went to Abraham who was still alive or maybe even to a priest of the Lord like Melchizedek. But she inquired and the Lord answered.

He told her that the sons in her womb would become two rival nations with one being stronger than the other and that the descendants of the older son will serve the descendants of the younger.

Let me give you a little bit of the post-history before we move on with the story. Esau became the father of the Edomites; and, as we know, Jacob became the father of the 12 tribes of Israel. The Edomites settled in the land that stretched from the Red Sea (or the gulf Aqaba) up to the bottom of the Dead Sea. It is within modern day Jordan and is where Petra is located. It was called, Edom.

Until the time of David, Edom was the stronger of the two nations. There had been princes and kings in Edom far before there were any in Israel. In fact, it was the Edomites who refused to let the Israelites pass through their territory when they were on their way to the Promised Land forcing the Israelites to go all the way around Edom and up through Moab.

Years and years later, however, it was King David who subdued Edom and enslaved them. This lasted for over 150 years. During this time, Israel was their overlord and they lost all self-rule and governance. It was not until the days of King Jehoram that they rebelled and finally were able to recover their territorial rights and once again establish their own king. We will find out that there were

actually 2 prophecies given by Isaac both of which were literally fulfilled in this history of these 2 nations.

Now, let's go back to the beginning. When the twins were born Esau came out first but Jacob was clutching the heel of Esau. Jacob's name literally means heel catcher or one who supplants. The idea behind the name is that Jacob would trip up Esau and then jump in front of him; which is exactly what happened.

From the beginning, the two boys were completely different. Esau grew up as a man of the outdoors and loved to hunt and was the favorite of Isaac whereas Jacob liked to stay at home and was essentially a momma's boy. We are not sure if he was his mother's favorite because of the prophecy or because of his more feminine disposition, but he was definitely Rebekah's favorite son.

One day when Jacob was cooking some stew Esau came home from a hunt and was famished and wanted some of the stew. I mean that picture just kind of says it all—Esau hunting and Jacob at home cooking. Jacob agreed to give him some stew if Esau would give him his birthright—the right's of the oldest son. Esau was a pretty impetuous fellow and figured that his birthright did him no good if he starved to death so he agreed. Esau swore an oath selling all his rights as the firstborn to his younger brother Jacob.

We are told that Esau ate and then left giving no mind to what he had just done even though he gave up his entire inheritance. In these days the firstborn would become the chieftain of the family, receive a double portion of all the inheritance, and obtain the blessing of the father. This was a big deal and Esau just disregarded it all and walked away picking the meat from between his teeth ready for his afternoon nap.

Then years later when Isaac was old and almost blind, he called for Esau and said that he might die any day now. So he asked him to go hunt some wild game and prepare it just the way he likes it—all savory and good—and bring it to him to eat and then he will pronounce the blessing that belongs to the firstborn. I don't know; maybe he was unaware of the deal that Jacob and Esau made or maybe he was just going to ignore it. But either way, it incited serious “heel-catching” behavior out of Jacob who was manipulated by the cunning of his mother.

So Mom overheard this conversation between Isaac and Esau and when Esau left to go hunting she told Jacob to get two goats from the flocks. She said that she will prepare her father's favorite dish and he will bring the food to dad and receive the blessing of the firstborn instead of Esau.

Now although Isaac was almost blind, he was not totally without his faculties, which created a problem for Jacob. Esau was a hairy man who smelled like the outdoors and Jacob's skin was smooth and well, let's just say he did not have such a rough smell. So Mom told Jacob that when he kills the goats that she will make gloves for him from the goats' skin and would fasten a piece of their hairy skin around his neck in order to fool Isaac. She did just that; and before long Jacob was bringing in the savory and delicious dish to Isaac. Oh, and Rebekah also dressed Jacob in Esau's best clothes, which for some reason he had left around the house.

Isaac was surprised that “Esau” had returned so quickly with a catch, but Jacob said it is “because the Lord your God put it in my path” (**Genesis 27:20**). So Jacob used the name of the Lord to accomplish his trickery. Did you notice that it was not even “the Lord my God” but “the Lord your God.” At this point in time, Jacob was not even a true believer just a deceiver.

Then Isaac said he wanted to touch Jacob because he figured something was up. He recognized the voice as being that of Jacob. Yet, when he touched the hairy goat skins they felt just like Esau's—if you can imagine that. Isaac asked: “are you really my son Esau?” Jacob replied, “Yes, of course.” So Isaac ate the delicious meal. Then he called Jacob over one more time and asked him for a kiss and, when Jacob kissed him, Isaac caught the smell of his clothes and was finally convinced and **by faith** he unwittingly blessed Jacob. The blessing went as follows:

***Genesis 27:27-29***

"See, the smell of my son is as the smell of a field that the Lord has blessed! May God give you of the dew of heaven and of the fatness of the earth and plenty of grain and wine. Let peoples serve you, and nations bow down to you. Be lord over your brothers, and may your mother's sons bow down to you. Cursed be everyone who curses you, and blessed be everyone who blesses you!"

Isaac's blessing covered pretty much everything. Jacob would be the “one.” As soon as Jacob left Isaac, Esau returned from the hunting trip and he prepared his dad the meal and came before him. Isaac asked, “Who are you?” and Esau made it clear who he was and Isaac freaked out and trembled uncontrollably. Isaac said: “Then who was it that just served me wild game? I have already eaten it, and I blessed him with an **irrevocable** blessing before you came” (***Genesis 27:33***).

When Esau heard this he broke down and wailed. He begged Isaac for a blessing, but Isaac said that Jacob carried away (or stole) Esau's blessing. Esau

then begged him for any kind of blessing. Isaac said: "Behold, I have made him lord over you, and all his brothers I have given to him for servants, and with grain and wine I have sustained him. What then can I do for you, my son" (**Genesis 27:37-38**). Esau broke down and wept; then Isaac said:

### ***Genesis 27:39-40***

"You will live away from the richness of the earth, and away from the dew of the heaven above. You will live by your sword, and you will serve your brother. But when you decide to break free (or when you grow restless), you will shake his yoke from your neck."

So after all the intrigue and deceit, these were the two blessings that were given **by faith** and which set forth the destiny of two nations. So I have to ask. What is so remarkable about this story that caused it to be in the hall of faith?

Well, there is the faith of Isaac who knew that he had the power to bless and that his blessing would be **irrevocable** as he would be speaking, or "blessing," according to the will of the Lord. Isaac knew that his blessing would set forth the destiny of not just the two brothers but the two nations which would come from these brothers. And then there are also all the strange circumstances and dysfunctional family relationships that surround the impartation of the blessing. All of it gives us an unusual insight into God and how he deals with us.

Now, we know that the promise made to Abraham and Isaac was going to come through Jacob (the youngest) since that is what God told Rebekah before

they were born. So that begs the question. If it was going to come through Jacob no matter what, why was Isaac then empowered with this ability to give a destiny setting “blessing” when it is clear that he favored Esau. After all, this whole “blessing” is what provoked Rebekah and Jacob to plot and scheme on Jacob’s behalf. Why did not God just bless the one and not the other simply as a matter of fact?

I think this shows us that God always loves to work his purposes in and through those that are His, **by their faith**. God could just snap His fingers and things would be as they are to be, but He always seems to involve us in the execution of His will here on earth. We see this clearly in ***Romans 12, Ephesians 2*** and ***1 Corinthians 12-14*** where we find out that we believers are the body of Christ and Jesus Himself is the head. That means that as the head, He uses His body to accomplish His will. He wants us to experience Him as He leads us and moves in and through us in this world; it is how we get to know Him and how others get an introduction to Him.

I also find it so fascinating that Isaac knew that his words, in the sense of this “blessing,” had power. I believe that God must have given him the blessing of the firstborn long before and he was just waiting for the right time to release it. He spoke prophetically and he knew it; which is why he said that his blessing was **irrevocable**. His faith was rooted in who God was and what God had revealed to him; thus he spoke.

In addition, as we studied last week Isaac was a type of Christ there on Mount Moriah. I think that in this act, he continues to act in that “type” and like Jesus prophetically set forth his blessing on those who would carry on the legacy of

faith and those who would not. The scripture I am reminded of is in Matthew where Jesus says:

***Matthew 25:31-34; 41, 46***

But when the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit upon his glorious throne. All the nations will be gathered in his presence, and he will separate the people as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will place the sheep at his right hand and the goats at his left. Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the creation of the world...Then the King will turn to those on the left and say, 'Away with you, you cursed ones, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his demons...And they will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous will go into eternal life.

In God's economy there is always a separation between the sheep and the goats. The sheep are those who are according to the promise of Abraham—the promise of faith (***Galatians 3:6-7; 6:16; Luke 19:9***). The goats are those who live according to their own ways and never surrender to the ways of the Lord. We saw this same truth in the story of Isaac and Ishmael and the way God selected Isaac to be the progeny of faith; whereas, Ishmael was rejected.

In like manner, Isaac, acting as a type of the Lord, set forth a blessing on those who would come to God through faith and those who would not; both of which are represented in Jacob and Esau. The immediate fulfillment of this prophecy



would be in the establishment of the nation of Israel and the nation of Edom, but the ultimate fulfillment is in you and me (the sheep—the Israel of God) and those who have rejected Jesus as their Lord and Savior (the goats).

I also find it fascinating that God used Rebekah's and Jacob's deceit and trickery to bring the prophecy to fruition. Now, this does not mean that He condoned their rotten behavior; it just means that He used it. For us this is the best of news. This tells us that God is so much bigger than our sin and our failings.

We cannot think that just because we did this bad thing or that bad thing that our lives are ruined and we somehow permanently altered God's plan for our lives. That is simply not the case. If He has something specific that He wants to do with us, it will get done. As Job said: "I know that you can do all things and that no purpose of Yours can be thwarted" (**Job 42:2**). What an amazing truth! No purpose of the Lord's can be thwarted no matter how rotten you may be.

We saw this so clearly demonstrated in the story of Abraham and Sarah. We need to hold to this truth and not let the enemy lie to us and weigh us down with our failings such that we end up lingering in the place of self-pity and disappointment. Remember, we are not only forgiven when we sin (**Hebrews 10:18**), but our Dad is clearly far bigger than anything we can do or anything we can muck-up. His sovereignty over all the affairs of man is like nothing any of us have ever imagined; it is absolute (**Daniel 4:34-35**).

If you are a sheep, a descendant of Abraham by faith, this truth should be a warm and comfortable blanket that you wrap around your body to shake off the cold sting of the enemy's lies. If you are a goat, I encourage you to become a

sheep and place your faith in Jesus Christ. Believe me; you don't want to be a goat; the outcome leaves much to be desired.

### ***Hebrews 11:21***

By faith Jacob, when dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, bowing in worship over the head of his staff.

So the book of Hebrews jumps over the rest of the story of Jacob and moves to the end of his life right before he dies. At this time Jacob is 147 years old. Jacob's son Joseph had become the Prime Minister of Egypt, the second most powerful person of the world (and that is not an exaggeration as Egypt was the ruling power of that day). Joseph brought Jacob and all his brothers to Egypt to live as there was such an extreme drought and famine in the land of Canaan that they would have otherwise died. All of this fulfilled a prophecy the Lord had given Abraham in ***Genesis 15:13-16***.

One day Joseph comes and visits his father whose health was failing rapidly and brings along with him his two sons Manasseh and Ephraim. Jacob was bed ridden and we are told that he had to gather up all his strength to just sit up and greet Joseph and his sons. Let's pick up the story:

### ***Genesis 48:3-20***

And Jacob said to Joseph, "God Almighty appeared to me at Luz in the land of Canaan and blessed me, and said to me, 'Behold, I will make you fruitful and

multiply you, and I will make of you a company of peoples and will give this land to your offspring after you for an everlasting possession.' And now your two sons, who were born to you in the land of Egypt before I came to you in Egypt, are mine; Ephraim and Manasseh shall be mine, as Reuben and Simeon are. And the children that you fathered after them shall be yours. They shall be called by the name of their brothers in their inheritance...

When Israel saw Joseph's sons, he said, "Who are these?" Joseph said to his father, "They are my sons, whom God has given me here." And he said, "Bring them to me, please, that I may bless them." Now the eyes of Israel were dim with age, so that he could not see. So Joseph brought them near him, and he kissed them and embraced them. And Israel said to Joseph, "I never expected to see your face; and behold, God has let me see your offspring also."

Then Joseph removed them from his knees, and he bowed himself with his face to the earth. And Joseph took them both, Ephraim in his right hand toward Israel's left hand, and Manasseh in his left hand toward Israel's right hand, and brought them near him. And Israel stretched out his right hand and laid it on the head of Ephraim, who was the younger, and his left hand on the head of Manasseh, crossing his hands (for Manasseh was the firstborn).

And he blessed Joseph and said, "The God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked, the God who has been my shepherd all my life long to this day, the angel who has redeemed me from all evil, bless the boys; and in them let my name be carried on, and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; and let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth."

When Joseph saw that his father laid his right hand on the head of Ephraim, it displeased him, and he took his father's hand to move it from Ephraim's head to Manasseh's head. And Joseph said to his father, "Not this way, my father; since this one is the firstborn, put your right hand on his head." But his father refused and said, "I know, my son, I know. He also shall become a people, and he also shall be great. Nevertheless, his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his offspring shall become a multitude of nations." So he blessed them that day, saying, "By you Israel will pronounce blessings, saying, 'God make you as Ephraim and as Manasseh.'" Thus he put Ephraim before Manasseh.

Once again we see this very unusual act whereby the one that gives the blessing **by faith** lifts up and exalts the younger son over the older. It is clear that Jacob knew very well what he was doing despite being blind. He blessed Ephraim with the blessing of the firstborn even though it displeased Joseph. He knew what the Lord wanted and **by faith** extended his "blessing" knowing that it would set forth the destiny of these two tribes.

I want to quickly make note of the statement back in **Hebrews 11:21** that Jacob bowed in worship over the head of his staff. Being the chieftain of his tribe, the staff represented his power and authority over all his sons regardless of the fact that Joseph was the Prime Minister of Egypt—the ultimate power on earth. Jacob's authority was a spiritual authority granted by God and therefore trumped Joseph's superior earthly authority. I think that is the point the author of Hebrews wants to make—the spiritual always triumphs over the physical and we will see why in just a minute.

But before I explain that, there is a little technical point that should be explained. The original Hebrew text says that Jacob bowed over his bed, but the Septuagint (which as I explained before is the Greek translation of the Hebrew text—kind of like the ESV is an English translation of the ancient texts) translates the Hebrew with just a slight change of a vowel to mean staff instead of bed. The Spirit obviously moved the author to quote from the Septuagint instead of the original Hebrew to make this point about spiritual authority trumping earthly authority; so we cannot just skip over this part of the passage.

This story is very similar to the other one, but what I want to draw your attention to is why I believe the book of Hebrews highlights that it was all **by faith**. I think all these passages have more to do with the **prophetic picture** that is painted in these acts than it has to do with the individuals who performed the act. Sure, both Isaac and Jacob believed that what they said were the words of the Lord and were in accordance with his will; but on its own I am not sure that what they did in and of itself was really the main take away from this passage.

So let's consider the following: Abraham blessed Isaac and set him above the actual first born Ishmael; Isaac blessed Jacob and set him above the actual first born Esau; and Jacob blessed Ephraim and set him above the actual first born Manasseh. And in the same way the Father blessed Jesus and set Him above the actual first born Adam.

Adam was, humanly speaking, the firstborn of all creation and it was through Adam that sin and death was introduced to all of mankind and the world. But we now know that God would make Jesus the firstborn of all creation—the One who is before all things (***Colossians 1:15-18; Hebrews 1:6***); and, through his death and

resurrection, Jesus would supplant Adam and take away the power of sin and death which, through Adam, held all men in bondage.

You should also check out ***Romans 5:14-21*** and ***1 Corinthians 15:45-49*** where Adam and Christ are contrasted and the point is made that the natural came first (the firstborn in the flesh) and the spiritual came second (Christ and His ultimate rule and authority which supplants the physical).

Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob all in turn were a “type” of the Father. Each of these men set the precedence where the younger brother would supplant the older brother and would be the heir to all things. And as we know, ***Hebrews 1:2*** told us that the Father appointed Jesus to be the heir of all things (***Psalms 2:8; Matthew 28:18***).

So these “blessings” that were given **by faith** paint an incredible prophetic picture of what the Father was going to fulfill in and through the Son. Again, all these Old Testament stories point to Jesus and speak about Him and that is why these little cryptic snippets were included in the hall of faith.

But the story gets better, at least with regard to you and me. We are actually a lot like Ephraim and Manasseh. We get a blessing that is beyond amazing—the blessing of the Son. Here is how Jacob ultimately blessed the sons of Joseph:

### ***Genesis 49:22-26***

Joseph is the foal of a wild donkey, the foal of a wild donkey at a spring—one of the wild donkeys on the ridge. Archers attacked him savagely; they shot at him and harassed him. But his bow remained taut, and his arms were strengthened

by the hands of the Mighty One of Jacob, by the Shepherd, the Rock of Israel. May the God of your father help you; may the Almighty bless you with the blessings of the heavens above, and blessings of the watery depths below, and blessings of the breasts and womb. May the blessings of your father surpass the blessings of the ancient mountains, reaching to the heights of the eternal hills. May these blessings rest on the head of Joseph, who is a prince among his brothers.

Christ is the firstborn, but we follow in Christ's footsteps and through the promise of Abraham we will become, as promised, heirs of this world (**Romans 4:13**)—an heir through God (**Galatians 4:7**). Like Manasseh we are adopted into the family of God and are heirs with Christ (**Romans 8:15; Ephesians 1:5**)—who is represented by Ephraim.

In other words, we get to come along for the ride and in so doing we participate in the full blessing of the Father which has been bestowed upon the Son. He has even made us to be a kingdom of priests to His God (**Revelation 1:6**); for we have been predestined to become conformed to the image of the Son, so that He (Jesus) would be the firstborn among many brethren (**Romans 8:29-30**). In other words, the Father promised Jesus a huge family and we are it.

Here is another thought to consider. These passages may also point to the fact that the true church (who is like the younger brother) should have more blessing and honor than the Jewish nation (who is the older brother). The younger supplants the older and becomes the rightful heir to all things.

### ***Hebrews 11:22***

By faith Joseph, at the end of his life, made mention of the exodus of the Israelites and gave directions concerning his bones.

Joseph believed that the promised deliverance made to Abraham in ***Genesis 15:13-16*** would come. He knew that there were to be 400 years of oppression and bondage and in the end they would come away with great wealth. After 4 generations Abraham's descendants would return to Canaan and would dwell in what would then be known as the Promised Land.

Joseph was convinced that God would do exactly as God has promised and in so doing **by faith** made the sons of Israel swear an oath that they would take his body with them when they returned (***Genesis 50:25-26***). In ***Exodus 13:19***, we are told that upon departing Egypt, Moses took the bones of Joseph with him and in ***Joshua 24:32*** we are told that the bones were buried in the parcel of land allotted to the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh.

Now I hope by now that you can guess that Joseph's mention of the exodus and the instructions concerning his bones was not "just" an exercise of his great faith that God would do as God had promised; but it was a great exercise of faith because of what it pointed forward to—in this case, the resurrection of the Messiah and His descendants.

The Promised Land is a metaphor for a couple of things depending upon what perspective you are coming from. If you are Jewish, it is a metaphor for heaven. If you are a Christian, it is a metaphor for eternal life that begins in the here and now—a life which is ultimately consummated in heaven. But, either way, it is all



dependent upon the resurrection of the dead unto life eternal; and, as we know, that is all dependent upon Jesus who is the firstborn from the dead (***Colossians 1:18***)—the one who conquered death and gave us life.

Jesus literally rose from the dead, in the flesh, meaning in a physical body, and in so doing promised that we would also conquer death and one day literally rise from the dead in a physical—yet immortal—body.

***1 Corinthians 15:42-49***

It is the same way with the resurrection of the dead. Our earthly bodies are planted in the ground when we die, but they will be raised to live forever. Our bodies are buried in brokenness, but they will be raised in glory. They are buried in weakness, but they will be raised in strength. They are buried as natural human bodies, but they will be raised as spiritual bodies. For just as there are natural bodies, there are also spiritual bodies.

The Scriptures tell us, "The first man, Adam, became a living person." But the last Adam—that is, Christ—is a life-giving Spirit. What comes first is the natural body, then the spiritual body comes later. Adam, the first man, was made from the dust of the earth, while Christ, the second man, came from heaven. Earthly people are like the earthly man, and heavenly people are like the heavenly man. Just as we are now like the earthly man, we will someday be like the heavenly man.

Joseph's prophetic statement is a promise for all of us—a hope for a future. It is a promise that there is more to come; a promise that gave him great confidence and should, likewise, give us great confidence. His prophecy was a promise that, like Jesus, we would rise from the dead and our physical bodies will be transformed into supernatural bodies.

Isn't the Bible amazing? When you stop and really dig into the scriptures, it is incredible how much meaning they pack even in the most arcane passages. All these "blessings" were **by faith** for they all pointed to the fulfillment of all our promises in the person of Jesus Christ.

Next week we are going to get into the story of Moses. So read ahead and study hard and see if the Holy Spirit, **by faith**, will reveal to you a bit of all that He has stored away for our understanding.

Let's Pray.