

# JESUS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

## Lesson 10: JACOB & ESAU

### Firstborn Sons

Aim: To understand the significance of Esau selling his inheritance and his rights as the firstborn to Jacob.

Key Scriptures: Genesis 25:23-34 & 27:11-18

In our previous lesson, we studied how a search was made for a bride for Isaac from amongst Abraham's family. As Abraham sent his oldest servant to search for the bride, so God the Father has sent the Holy Spirit to search for a Bride for His son Jesus. Rebekah, who became Isaac's wife, was found drawing deeply from a well of water, and likewise faithful Christians who will become Christ's Bride will be found drawing deeply from the Word of God, represented by the water.

Rebekah was willing to leave her family and go with the family's oldest servant in order to become Isaac's wife. But it was 20 years before Isaac and Rebekah had children, and then it only happened as a result of divine intervention after Isaac pleaded with the Lord. When Rebekah did conceive, twins struggled within her and this is what the Lord said to her:

*Genesis 25:23 ... "Two nations are in your womb, Two peoples shall be separated from your body; One people shall be stronger than the other, And the older shall serve the younger."*

**Q:** How does the Lord describe the twins?

**A:**

**Q:** Which of the twins will serve the other twin?

**A:**

In the *natural* realm, it is the first born son who has certain rights attributed to him that the subsequent children within the family do not have. But things are not so in the spiritual realm! So far in our study we have seen that God sets aside the first and establishes the second. We saw it with Adam's sons, Cain being set aside and Seth being established, and with Abraham's sons, Ishmael being set aside and Isaac established. Now we see God revealing this same principle to Isaac's wife, Rebekah, even prior to the birth of twins who were about to be born – the first is to be set aside and the second established. Let's read the details about it now:

*Genesis 25:24 So when her days were fulfilled for her to give birth, indeed there were twins in her womb.*

*25 And the first came out red. He was like a hairy garment all over; so they called his name Esau.*

*26 Afterward his brother came out, and his hand took hold of Esau's heel; so his name was called Jacob. Isaac was sixty years old when she bore them.*

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**Q:** Why was the firstborn called Esau?

**A:**

**Q:** What did the second born do to be given the name Jacob?

**A:**

Esau means 'hairy' and Jacob means 'supplanter'. To **supplant** means '**to take the place of**'.

As the twins were being born, Jacob, the second born child, took the heel of Esau. This showed that the second born would eventually be stronger, and take the place of the firstborn.

As shown, that was exactly what Rebekah had been told in v.23 - that the older (firstborn - Esau) would serve the younger - Jacob.

Let's take a moment to see how Scripture describes the two boys.

Continuing:

*Genesis 25:27 So the boys grew. And **Esau** was a skillful hunter, a man of the field; but **Jacob** was a mild man, dwelling in tents.*

**Q:** What was Esau?

**A:**

**Q:** How was Jacob described?

**A:**

Esau, the first born, “was a skillful hunter, living in the field,” a description portending that he lived for fleshly things – the things of this world/this age.

**Q:** Do you remember what the field represents in Scripture?

**A:**

Jacob, the second born, is described as a mild man, who lived in tents. The word *mild* used to describe Jacob is a word in Hebrew which means that he was *morally upright in a complete sense*. This word is used a total of 13 times in the OT, 7 times in the book of Job – 3 times in which God describes Job's character, even telling Satan that at that time there was not a man on earth like Job (Job 1:1, 8; 2:3). The word is also used twice in the Song of Solomon where the king describes the woman he loved above all others (Song 5:2; 6:1). And so, we can see that the Holy Spirit's use of this word to describe Jacob indicates that he was *completely morally upright*.

But there is another description of Jacob in Gen. 25:27, which indicates even more about the way he lived. .

**Q:** How is Jacob additionally described?

**A:**

**Q:** Can you think of anyone else in the OT who is described as living in tents?

**A:**

There is a passage in the Book of Hebrews which speaks specifically of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob living in tents, and which clearly reveals what this phrase would imply:

*Hebrews 11:8* By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going.

*9* By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise;

*10* for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

**Q:** So, according to this passage, what does it reveal about Jacob that he lived in tents?

**A:**

And so, we see that Esau, the firstborn, pictures an individual who lives with fleshly thing in mind with a view only to the present things of this world, and Jacob the second born, pictures an individual who lives with spiritual things in mind with a view to future things.

And these descriptive characteristics play out in the events that unfold in the ongoing details given in Genesis 25. Continuing:

*28* And **Isaac loved Esau** because he ate of his game, but **Rebekah loved Jacob**.

*29* Now Jacob cooked a stew; and Esau came in from the field, and he was weary.

*30 And Esau said to Jacob, "Please feed me with that same red stew, for I am weary." Therefore his name was called **Edom** [lit. Red].*

*31 But Jacob said, "Sell me your birthright as of this day."*

*32 And Esau said, "Look, I am about to die; so what is this birthright to me?"*

*33 Then Jacob said, "Swear to me as of this day." So he swore to him, and sold his birthright to Jacob.*

*34 And Jacob gave Esau bread and stew of lentils; then he ate and drank, arose, and went his way. Thus **Esau despised his birthright.***

**Q:** Why did Isaac love Esau?

**A:**

Rebekah loved Jacob because he was a mild man and of good character. Jacob was also happy to stay close to their home, made up of various tents that they lived in. But Esau was a man of the field.

**Q:** How else does the Bible refer to Esau and what does it mean?

**A:**

**Q:** What does Jacob ask of Esau in exchange for the red stew he made?

**A:**

As the firstborn son, Esau would have automatically been entitled to certain birthrights not available to Jacob, the second born. However, as we can see from the verses we have just read, Esau was so hungry that he "***despised his birthright,***" (v.34), thus disregarding the blessings that were to come to him once his father died.

Esau was **giving up his birthright** to feed his flesh, whereas Jacob did everything possible to **gain the birthright** because he deemed **the rights of the firstborn of great value.**

**Q:** What are the firstborn rights that Esau despised and Jacob valued? Any thoughts?

**A:**

Let's take a moment to understand the significance of receiving the double portion of the father's inheritance. If a man had 2 sons and he died, then his inheritance, which he would pass on to his sons, would be divided into 3 parts. The firstborn son would receive 2 parts, and the second born would receive just one part.

Now we come to the time when Isaac, being old and blind, was about to bestow the blessing of the rights of the firstborn on his firstborn son. So, he told Esau to go out and hunt game and make him the savory food that he loved, and then he would bless him. (You can read about it in Gen. 27:1-10.)

Rebekah had overheard what Isaac said to Esau, but **she remembered the prophecy** about her two sons. As a result, she instructed Jacob to kill 2 goats so that she could prepare the savory food for Isaac herself. Rebekah also used the skins of the goats and put them on the smooth parts of Jacob's hands and neck.

Do you remember we read that Esau was hairy, but Jacob was smooth skinned? Rebekah then took Esau's clothing that she had and put it on Jacob so that he could go in and receive the father's blessing, instead of Esau. Then Jacob' said:

***Genesis 27:11** And Jacob said to Rebekah his mother, "Look, Esau my brother is a hairy man, and I am a smooth-skinned man.*

*12 "Perhaps my father will feel me, and I shall seem to be a deceiver to him; and I shall bring a curse on myself and not a blessing."*

*13 But his mother said to him, "Let your curse be on me, my son; only obey my voice, and go, get them [the goats] for me."*

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*14 And he went and got them and brought them to his mother, and his mother made savory food, such as his father loved.*

*15 Then Rebekah took the choice clothes of her elder son Esau, which were with her in the house, and put them on Jacob her younger son.*

*16 And she put the skins of the kids of the goats on his hands and on the smooth part of his neck.*

*17 Then she gave the savory food and the bread, which she had prepared, into the hand of her son Jacob.*

*18 So he went to his father and said, "My father.' And he said, "Here I am. Who are you, my son?"*

Jacob was concerned that he might be a deceiver and bring a curse instead of a blessing upon himself. At first glance, we may be inclined to think that he is a deceiver. But is that the way we should look upon this?

In the next lesson, we shall see how when Jacob took in the savory food, covered in animal skins and wearing Esau's clothes, that he was a TYPE of Jesus Christ, and that although he might appear to be a deceiver, he really isn't!

But before we close out this lesson, there is one more thing to bring to the forefront. Jacob is not only a type of Christ, but he is also a type of those who are *in Christ*, a type of those who live in such a way so as to be placed (i.e., adopted) as a firstborn within the family in order to receive the rights of the firstborn. And not only this, but Esau is also a type of people within the Family of God (Christians) who live in such a way as to forsake their inheritance, and later regrets it almost beyond what language can express. Again, the Book of Hebrews deals with this and warns all Christians, using Esau as our example.

***Hebrews 12:16*** *lest there be any fornicator or profane person like Esau, who for one morsel of food sold his birthright.*

*17 For you know that afterward, when he wanted to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought it diligently with tears.*

(The way the last phrase v. 17 is written in the Greek reveals that Esau's distress is beyond the point of even being able to be comforted.)

Esau, a man of the flesh – representing our first birth – lived in the flesh. In this, he is seen as a fornicator, a profane person who sold his birthright, but as we will see in our next lesson, when he wanted to inherit the blessing, was rejected and wept bitter tears for what he had lost. He could not find repentance (a change of mind) in his father. At that point, nothing could be changed. The way he lived his life determined his outcome in the end (he was set aside as firstborn).

On the other hand, Jacob, a spiritual man – representing our second birth, looked forward to and did all things necessary to be *placed as a firstborn son* within the family, and as a result he later received the blessings of the inheritance of the firstborn.

The antitype of the picture of Esau and Jacob can be seen in the whole of Romans chapter 8, but for time's sake, this chapter has been down extensively. Study through these verses and see if you can see hints of Esau and Jacob within the text and make notes of it in the column.

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***Romans 8:1*** *There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.*

*5 For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.*

*6 For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. ...*

...

*14 For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. ...*

*16 The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,*

*17 and if children, then heirs--heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together...*

*19 For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God.*

...

*23 Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body.*

**Q:** From this passage, how can we see the first being set aside and the second being established?

**A:**

**Q:** Thinking this through carefully, according to v. 23, in the end what happens to the person who lives by the spirit, rather than the flesh?

**A:**

In the antitype, it will be the children within the family, who are led by the Spirit (V. 14) who are seen as sons, and it will be sons within the family who stand to be “adopted” at the JSOC. Interestingly, the word *adoption* is from a compound word in the Greek language which literally means **son-placing**. And v. 23 reveals that the redemption of the body IS the adoption – being placed as a firstborn son, all of which is seen in the type of Jacob replacing Esau.

Next week we will see more details on Christ in this Old Testament picture of Jacob taking the place of Esau. Here are some verses for you to read this week and consider how they fit into the account of Jacob & Esau:

***Philippians 2:5*** *Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus,*

*6 who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God,*

*7 but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men.*

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Let's pray...