

# Genesis

*Creation, Covenants, All Grace – study 22*



## **PROPHECY FULFILLED -- EVEN to the FAITHLESS**

(25:11-34)

**25:11-18 How is grace evident in the genealogy of Ishmael? (17:20; Note to *toledoths* 8 & 9 in this chapter -- vv.12,19)**

(1) We believe that God took the trouble to record the names of the 12 sons of Ishmael because they were the grandsons of Abraham. -- **D. G. Barnhouse, Genesis** VoL2 p.39

**25:19-28 How are predestination and providence highlighted in the story of the birth of Jacob and Esau? (Rom. 9:10-13)**

(2) Through his own action Jacob devalued the name [Jacob] into a synonym for treachery; it is taken up in the Hebrew of Jeremiah 9:4 (3, MT) 'every brother will utterly supplant'. But the tenacity which was his bane secured blessing in the end (32:26). -- **D. Kidner, Genesis** p.151

**25:29-34 Though God's judgments are just, why is grace, not justice, the dominant attribute of Yahweh in this episode?**

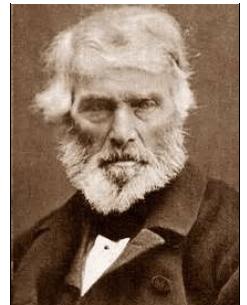
(3) In the story of the birthright, neither Esau nor Jacob is to be admired. The one was profane, in that he allowed the lower side of his nature to master him; and sold his birthright in order to appease his physical hunger. The other was mean, in that he took advantage of that hunger to obtain the birthright. -- **G. Campbell Morgan, The Analysed Bible** p.167

(4) Many scoffs have been directed against this story, as if it were unworthy of credence that eating a dish of lentils should have shaped the life of a man and of his descendants. But is it not always the case that trifles turn out to be

Lentils & birthrights, hinges & doors

determining points? Hinges are very small, compared with the doors which move on them. -- **Alexander Maclaren, Genesis** p.195

(5) George Eliot wrote of "that inexorable law of human souls, that we are preparing ourselves for sudden deeds by the reiterated choice of good or evil that gradually determines character." Thomas Carlyle wrote of Esau: "He is the kind of man of whom we are in the habit of charitably saying that he is nobody's enemy but his own. But, in truth, he is God's enemy, because he wastes the splendid manhood which God has given him. Passionate, impatient, impulsive, incapable of looking before him, refusing to estimate the worth of anything which does not immediately appeal to his senses, preferring the animal to the spiritual, he is rightly called a 'profane person.' Alas! while the body is so broad and brawny, must the soul lie blinded, dwarfed, stupefied, almost annihilated?" -- **Donald Barnhouse, op. cit, pp.45-46**



**THOMAS CARLYLE**  
Esau – defines a 'profane person'

## **COVENANT FAITHFULNESS -- NOT OURS' (26:1-35)**

**26:1-5 Are there conditions attached to the covenant reiteration? (12:3; 22:18)**

(6) The salient feature of Isaac's life is that it has no salient features. He lived out his hundred and eighty years in quiet, with little to make history. Few details of his story are given, and some of these are not very creditable. He seems never to have wandered far from the neighbourhood of Beersheba. -- **Alexander Maclaren, op. cit, p.202**

(7) Was there any cause in Isaac for God to bless him? None whatsoever. Isaac was the mediocre son of an extraordinary father. -- **Donald G. Barnhouse, op. cit, Vol.2 p.49**

**26:6-33 Catalogue Isaac's fine personal qualities which brought about such blessings**

(8) Isaac's small household represented a great variety of types of character. He himself lacked energy, and seems in later life to have been very much of a tool in the hands of others. Rebekah had the stronger nature, was persistent, energetic, and managed her husband to her heart's content. - **Alexander Maclaren, op cit, p.192**

(9) Typically human, Isaac mixes faith and fear, an incompatible combination which can give a special quality of meanness to the sins of the religious; and nowhere more so than here. -- **Derek Kidner, op. cit, p.153**

(10) Does not this show clearly that God never meant him to go even to Gerar? By this Divine appearance 'the same night' it is evident that Isaac was at last in line with God's will, and could receive Divine revelation. This the first time that we have the now familiar title, 'the God of Abraham.' Isaac is told not to fear, that he can rely upon the Divine presence and blessing, and upon the fulfilment of

the promise to his father Abraham. - **W.H. Griffith Thomas**, *Genesis 25-36* p.28

#### **26:34,35 Note the worm in Isaac's apple**

(11) An appetite can be the undoing of a life and we discover that Isaac's love of food was passed on to Esau, who sold his birthright for a mess of pottage. *Lord, put a guard on all our appetites.* -- **Donald Grey Barnhouse**, *op.cit*, p.63

### **DECEIT REAPS ITS JUST DESSERTS, but GRACE TRIUMPHS (27:1-46)**

#### **27:1-17 Could this deception be justified?**

(12) Rebekah's was "smother love"; she was fattening her own pride on the success of her favorite son. Her ruse resulted in 20 years of exile for Jacob, amid peril and trouble for which his sheltered life at Rebekah's side had not prepared him. -- **D. Barnhouse**, *op. cit*, p.64

Rebekah:  
Mother love, or  
smother love?

(13) If Isaac, Rebekah, and Jacob had been each wrong in their share in the transaction, Esau deserves at least equal blame. Not to speak of his previous knowledge of the will of God on this point, he disguised from his brother Jacob that he was about to obtain from his father's favour that which he had actually sold to Jacob! -- **Alfred Edersheim**, *Bible History Vol.1* p.118

(14) Esau had traded away the firstborn's blessing. This makes all four participants in the present scene almost equally at fault. *Isaac*, whether he knew of the sale or not, knew God's birth-oracle of 25:23, yet set himself to use God's power to thwart it (see verse 29). This is the outlook of magic, not religion. *Esau*, in agreeing to the plan, broke his own oath of 25:33. *Rebekah* and *Isaac*, with just cause, made no approach to God or man, no gesture of faith or love, and reaped the appropriate fruit of hatred. -- **Derek Kidner**, *op. cit.* p.155

#### **27:18-29 How are the sins of the fathers visible in the sons?**

(15) The deceit of Jacob, actually practised, creates a pitiful and pathetic picture. He came into the presence of his father with a positive lie upon his lips; to be followed by a blasphemous lie in explanation. -- **G. Campbell Morgan**, *op. cit.* p.175

(16) The appearance of the children did not belie their character when they grew up. The wild disposition of Esau, which found occupation in the roaming life of a hunter, reminds us of Ishmael; while Jacob, gentle and domestic, sought his pleasures at home. As is so often the case, Isaac and Rebekah made favourites of the sons who had the opposite of their own disposition. -- **A Edersheim**, *op. cit.* p.110

(17) All five senses play a conspicuous part, largely by their fallibility, in this classic attempt to handle spiritual responsibilities by the light of nature. Ironically, even the sense of taste on which Isaac prided himself gave him the wrong answer. But the real scandal is Isaac's frivolity: his palate had long since governed his heart (25:28) and silenced his tongue (for he was powerless to rebuke the sin that was Esau's downfall); he now proposed to make it his arbiter

between peoples and nations (29). Unfitness for office shows in every act of this sightless man rejecting the evidence of his ears for that of his hands, following the promptings of his palate and seeking inspiration through -- of all things -- his nose (27). -- **Derek Kidner**, *op cit*. p.156

(18) ...[v 29] contradicts the assertion in the Declaration of Independence that all men are created equal. Men are created unequal in a thousand ways, and human government can confer equality only of opportunity and of justice. True equality was given by God at the cross -- **Donald G. Barnhouse**, *op. cit*, p.70

#### **27:30-41 Analyze the character of Esau (Heb. 12:14-17)**

(19) The sight of a mess of lentils, which to this day is a favourite dish in Syria and Egypt, induced him, unaccustomed and unable as he was to control the desires of the moment, to barter away his birthright for this "red" potage. The circumstances become the more readily intelligible when we remember, besides the unbridled disposition of Esau, that, as Lightfoot has pointed out, it was a time of commencing famine in the land. For profanity consists in this: for the sensual gratification or amusement of the moment to give up that which is spiritual and unseen; to be careless of that which is holy, so as to snatch the present enjoyment, -- in short practically not deem anything holy at all, if it stands in the way of present pleasure. -- **Alfred Edersheim**, *op. cit.*, pp.111-112

(20) But we judge the two men wrongly if we let ourselves be fascinated, as Isaac was, by Esau, and forget that the superficial attractions of his character cover a core worthy of disapprobation. They are crude judges of character who prefer the type of man who spurns the restraints of patient industry and order; and popular authors, who make their heroes out of such, err in taste no less than in morals. There is a very unwholesome kind of literature, which is devoted to glorifying the Esaus as fine fellows, with spirit, generosity, and noble carelessness, whereas at bottom they are governed by animal impulses, and incapable of estimating any good which does not appeal to sense, and that at once -- **Alexander Maclaren**, *op.cit*, p.193

(21) The one word 'profane' (Heb.12:16) in its literal meaning sums up his character. It comes from *pro-fanum*, 'outside the temple,' and refers to that plot of ground just in front of the fane which was common to everyone, as being outside the sacred enclosure. Gradually the word came to mean that which was purely earthly and common, as opposed to that which was sacred, consecrated, and dedicated to God. Esau's life was entirely earthbound. God was not in all his thoughts. ... Esau was one of the most inconstant of men, everything by turns and nothing long, a shallow nature full of impulse and ungoverned feelings; today despising his birthright, tomorrow wanting it back; today absolutely indifferent, tomorrow sorrowing over his loss. Jacob on the other hand was tenacious and persistent, and possessed a reserve of strength which, even though it was often directed into wrong channels, was in itself one of the most valuable features of human life. -- **W.H. Griffith Thomas**, *op.cit*, pp.13,15

Esau: a hero, a 'man's man' — or a 'profane person'?