

99-07-19c

We're ready now to resume our study of Genesis in chapter 25, and I feel like we're kind of giving the first part of the chapter short shrift, but I'm probably going to feel that way a lot if we're ever going to finish Genesis within our lifetime. So let's pick up now in verse 19. This is the genealogy of Isaac, Abraham's son.

Now this is another one of those structural markers. You have one in verse 12; you have another one here in verse 19. This in Hebrew is *elleh toledot*.

These are the generations of, and these are important signposts in the book. Divides it, we find that there are five major family histories in the pre-flood, the antediluvian portion of Genesis. Good ones alternating with bad ones, and here in the post-flood section of Genesis we have the same thing.

We have five major family histories. The good ones alternate with the bad ones. In this case you have Abraham, then you have Ishmael, then you have Isaac, then you have Esau, and then you have Jacob.

So Ishmael and Esau serve as counterpoint or as contrasts as the second and fourth in this series of five major books of the generations in the post-flood portion. And if you look back at what we studied before the flood, without reviewing that in detail, you'll find the same thing when you look at the line of Cain and so forth. Let's continue now in verse 19.

These are the generations of, or this is the genealogy of Isaac. And of course, *toledot*, within that word, *elleh*, meaning this is, and then *toledot*, the generations, this word has its roots in the verb *yalad*, which means to beget. So these are the beginnings, or this is what happened with Isaac.

And the interesting thing is that most of what occurs in this section of Genesis, as I mentioned before the break, has to do with Jacob. But these headings for sections of Genesis are not so much titles telling us whose life we're going to get the most detail on. This is the patriarch or the person who is seen as at least the *de facto* head of the family during the time that these things take place.

And during much of what we're going to see in the life of Jacob, Isaac is in fact the head of the family. He's just not in view. He's not on the scene.

Isaac, of course, is going to live well into the lifetime of Jacob. You'll notice the double emphasis in verse 19. This is the genealogy of Isaac, Abraham's son.

Abraham begot Isaac. It seems sort of peculiar. This is very unusual, and it breaks the pattern.

When you look at the other *elleh toledot* notices in the book, it doesn't go back and review the father as it does here. Why is that? Well, once again, not only are we tracing forward the covenant blessings that God gave to Abraham, and we're encouraged to see the emphasis on Isaac as the fulfillment of God's promises to Abraham. God promised Abraham that he would have a son and through him all the nations of the earth will be blessed.

This is that son. And lest we forget, it's emphasized twice in this single verse. Isaac was 40 years old when he took Rebekah as wife, the daughter of Bethuel, the Aramean of Paddan Aram.

By the way, this name for the region of the town of Haran up there is unique to the Genesis account. Paddan may mean field or road, but it's a designation for that region where the servant went and found Laban and his household up in the town of Haran. And she is the sister of Laban, the Aramean.

And of course this connection to the household, as I mentioned, will come up very soon again. Verse 21: Now Isaac pleaded with the Lord for his wife. Now we've noticed, you can't help but notice, that Isaac seems to be much more passive than some of the other patriarchs.

He is there as sort of a two-dimensional figure almost in the story of the sacrifice on the mountain. He has very little to do with his own betrothal and wedding. This is all done for him.

And once again, this is one of the places where we understand that even when we see the illustration of Isaac in some ways representing Jesus Christ, obviously in all ways he does not represent Jesus Christ. There's a stark contrast between Isaac as a passive patriarch and the Lord Jesus riding the white horse with the robe stained

with blood, with the sword and the conquest and victory that he is going to effect at the end of this age and the beginning of the millennium. So we observe that there are limits, and we have to be careful to not try to press things into an illustration that are not there.

But here we see Isaac in an active role, and it is again a reminder of the Lord Jesus Christ. What is the Lord currently doing on our behalf? He is seated at the right hand of the Father. He is interceding on our behalf.

What does Isaac do here for his wife? He intercedes on her behalf to the Lord. And what is the substance of his intercession? He prays to God that she might be fruitful and bear offspring. And this, of course, is the highest calling and the will of God for us, and this is what the intercession of the Lord Jesus Christ has as its substance for us.

God doesn't get beset with requests from Jesus for us to get a new car, a new washing machine, or a better house, or a different job, or live in a better city, or have problems resolved as an end in themselves. The purpose of intercession, in fact the purpose for our life, is to bear fruit. So Isaac takes this up before the Lord.

He pleaded with the Lord for his wife because she was barren, and the Lord granted his plea. And Rebekah, his wife, conceived. We're going to find out later that this is 20 years after the honeymoon.

They have lived together as man and wife for 20 years with no children. So when you want to talk about being barren, this is a well-established barrenness. This isn't sort of a few months of not being able to conceive.

This has gone on for two decades. And by this time, Isaac is going to be how old? If he's married at the age of 40, he's now 60. And his wife, we have to assume, is within some reasonable range of his age.

So even this conception in modern terms would be thought somewhat extraordinary. If you think, well, Rebekah had to be somewhere in his same generation, let's say she was five years younger, well then she's 55 at the point that she conceives. And by today's standards even, this would be somewhat extraordinary.

But we move directly to the circumstances of her pregnancy. The children struggled together within her. This is a fascinating verb here when it says that they struggled together because this verb in Hebrew is ratsats.

It's an onomatopoeic word, which is a fancy way of saying that its sound suggests its meaning. And ratsats is a word that means to smash, to crush. This is far more than struggle.

This is used in Judges 9:53 of skulls being smashed and in Psalm 74:14, or of breaking a reed, crushing a reed in Isaiah 36:6. So this is more than your kicking and kneeling that all pregnant women tend to feel on the part of the fetus—or what's the plural of that, feti? There's more than one fetus in there, and they are smashing together within her.

And she said, and this is not a very good translation, “If all is well, why am I like this?” What she's literally saying is, “If it's like this, why am I here?” She's beginning to despair of life itself. She thinks, if this is what it takes to have children, why am I even doing this? It's not even worth it.

“If it is like this, why am I here?” So she went to inquire of the Lord. It doesn't say that Isaac went again to intercede. Isaac seems to be content that she's pregnant, and well, you know how it is with pregnant women.

So now Isaac is off the scene, and Rebekah is going to inquire of the Lord. We don't know what form this inquiry took. I haven't done the calculations to figure out if Melchizedek is still on the scene up there.

I rather doubt it. And I think it would be at some distance because they're dwelling in Beer-lahai-roi, which is well south of the Hebron area or the area that will become Jerusalem, where Salem is and Melchizedek, king of Salem. In terms of there being a prophet on hand, often later when someone inquires of the Lord, they go to a prophet.

We don't have any indication that there is a prophet. Did she go to Abraham? Abraham is called a prophet of God by God Himself when He talks to Abimelech and He says, “This man is a prophet and he will intercede on your behalf,” and so forth. Did she go to her father-in-law for this? We're not told.

In some form or fashion, she went to inquire of the Lord. This indicates that she made some sort of geographical travel, and you imagine that at the point where you can feel the baby or babies moving around inside, that this is going to be well into her pregnancy. So I get the idea she didn't travel far.

Let's say she's six or seven months along, and this struggling is going on, and she's having intense discomfort and this kicking and gnashing and smashing that's going on inside, and it is unbearable. She says, "If it's like this, why am I here?" It's to the point where she's going to go talk to God about this. This tells us several things.

We've already reviewed the elements of her faith, how strong it was and her willingness to leave and to come to this land to invest in the future and to understand the promise of God to Abraham and to Isaac. But she is going to go to God and get some clarification because she can't see how she is going to survive this. So she went to inquire of the Lord, and again we don't know the mechanism, but the Lord replies and you have this wonderful prophetic utterance.

These are what in the Psalms we would call distichs or double lines, pairs of lines. The second line will reiterate and clarify what is in the first. The first line says, "Two nations are in your womb.

"Two peoples shall be separated from your body." So in the first line she finds out that she's got twins. In the second line she finds out that these twins are themselves going to be the fathers of nations.

Then the second doublet, or the second set of lines: "One people shall be stronger than the other, and the older shall serve the younger." So these nations are going to be in conflict, and one will in fact be subject to the other. And in that statement you have not only the fact that there will be a conflict, but that there is going to be a resolution.

When it says the elder will serve, they are going to struggle, but there is going to be a resolution of the struggle. There is going to be a sorting out. You can see this, I've seen this innumerable times up where my parents live because they are in the country and there are the usual complement of dogs and cats.

And especially among dogs, when a new dog shows up, someone will drive out there and dump a dog in the country and they seem to have a sixth sense that causes them to home in on my parents, and they always wind up staying. But there is always a sorting out of the hierarchy. You've seen this among dogs.

Whenever several dogs get together, there has to be a sorting out, and to find out that's where we get the term top dog. And so there is a period of struggle where they will nip and fight and quarrel and wrestle. But sooner or later you find the case where the dogs sort this out among themselves, and it's not always a result of size.

That's where we get that other saying, that it's not the size of the dog in the fight; it's the size of the fight in the dog. And I have often seen where larger dogs will kowtow and they'll be the ones to roll over and put their feet in the air, and that's the canine sign of submission. They say, "Okay, fine, you're the top dog."

And it can be some fierce little wiry dog and some bigger dog that's kind of jolly and easygoing where he'll just roll over and stick his feet in the air. He says, "Okay, fine, you can be the top dog." And after that sorting out, typically you don't have much more in the way of internecine or fraternal struggles between the dogs.

They've got this sorted out and they know who the leader is, and if two of them come up to the dish at the same time, there's one that will just back off and let the other one take first crack at the food. Well, this is what is implicit in what God says here to Rebekah. He says there are two babies.

These are going to be the fathers of two nations. These nations are going to be in conflict, but that conflict is going to be resolved and one of them is going to come out on top. It's not going to be an interminable conflict.

We have to ask ourselves the question, well, it certainly seems interminable. You can look in the Middle East today and the Israelites and the Arabs are still at each other's throats. But there is a portion of this statement in verse 23 that still has yet to be fulfilled.

There will come a time when the elder will serve the younger. So in verse 24, when her days were fulfilled for her to give birth, indeed there were twins in her womb, and the first came out red. He was like a hairy garment all over.

So they called his name Esau. This is another one of those wordplay things that we've seen recently here in this section of Genesis where you can play games with the consonants and with the vowels. In fact, there are going to be several wordplays on Esau's name.

The verse that follows, in verse 26: afterward his brother came out and his hand took hold of Esau's heel. So his name was called Jacob. And your New King James text note there may tell you that it's literally supplanter, but not necessarily.

Once again, Jacob is a name or a word upon which there are several plays. Ya'akov rhymes with Ya'abo, which means ya'avod. And when he says the older shall serve or be the slave of the younger, ebed in Hebrew means slave, E-B-E-D.

And ya'avod, when it says to serve or be the servant of ya'avod, rhymes with Ya'akov. And there's this wordplay going on. You also have the word for heel in Hebrew, which is aqev, A-Q-E-V.

And you have the consonants there, the Aleph and the Q and the Bet are the same consonants in Jacob's name. So he who grasps the heel is in view here, and therefore they called his name Jacob. So you get all the ideas of heel grasping.

An echo back to the fact that the elder will serve the younger, ya'avod, Ya'akov. There is a saying, may El, or God, protect or reward. The word for reward is Ya'akov.

And so when you put El Ya'akov or Ya'akov El, this is real close to Ya'akov, so there are a number of wordplays. All of these are designed to foreshadow. We've seen in the Gospel of Luke how Luke lays a foundation for what is going to come to pass.

He gives us these prophecies and the angelic pronouncements and the prophecies and the statements that are made by Anna and Simeon. And all of these give us an expectation that the things associated with John the Baptist and with the baby Jesus, there is going to be big doings associated with these children even before they are born. This expectation is raised.

These wordplays and so forth do the same thing with Jacob and Esau. Reading this account, when you come to this and you see the interweaving of their names and their destinies in a pronouncement that is made before they are born. And of course this will be alluded to by Paul in Romans chapter 9: before the twins were born and had done anything good or bad, it was said of them, "The elder shall serve the younger."

There is a statement of principle, and there is an element of principle here that has already been foreshadowed with Isaac and with Ishmael. And because that pattern has been set and because that principle has already been enunciated, God says the pattern, the principle, is going to find another illustration and another fulfillment with these two sons. So her days are fulfilled, the twins are born, the first comes out red, he is like a hairy garment all over, they called his name Esau.

Afterward his brother came out, his hand took hold of Esau's heel, so his name was called Jacob. Isaac was 60 years old when she bore them. So the boys grew, and Esau was a skillful hunter, a man of the field, but Jacob was a mild man dwelling in tents.

And once again, when it says mild or quiet here, a quiet man dwelling in tents, the word for this doesn't mean mild and it doesn't mean quiet. It's the word tam, T-A-M. If you have a really good memory, you may recall that back when we were studying Noah and it said that he was an upright man, perfect in all his ways, and we studied the idea of tamim, we saw that tam means perfect, means complete.

It is the functional equivalent of the Greek term that we have in the New Testament that is often translated perfect or complete. And the idea here is not so much about his righteousness in spiritual terms, but the idea that he was the perfect man. The contrast between Jacob and Esau is the contrast between someone who is self-sufficient, who finds what he needs in his own company.

I've known people like this. I've known children like this that even as a child they don't seem to necessarily need a lot of other children around. They can play for hours by themselves, and it's not that they're loners or that they're antisocial or that they're anything other than just content with their own company.

They don't feel the need to go out and search for stimulation or to search for companionship or to search for something that they seem to lack. They don't seem to be on a quest. They're self-contained.

They have a lot of equilibrium and they're just at home wherever they are. They don't seem to need to look outside themselves to find what they need for peace and contentment. And this is what tam means when it refers to Jacob.

Jacob is not on a quest. Esau seems to be just the opposite. He is restless at home.

He's not content to sit around. He wants to be out looking for something, finding something. And he takes this on as a vocation.

He becomes a hunter. And by its very nature, what is a hunter? A hunter is on a quest for something.

The elusive prey is out there and he's tracking it and he's searching for it and he's seeking it in the valleys and on the hillsides. So the nature, the personality and character of these two boys as they turn into men is quickly summarized for us in this single verse. The boys grew.

Esau is a skillful hunter. He goes out and searches for things and he finds them. He brings home the game, brings home the animals.

Jacob is a self-sufficient man. He's self-sustaining and he dwelt in tents. He stays at home.

Tent dwelling is the description of someone who keeps flocks and herds. You can go out and have the flocks and herds, but it's a domestic life. Isaac loved Esau because he ate of his game.

But Rebekah loved Jacob. And once again here, if anybody were tempted to push the analogy of Christ and the church with Isaac and Rebekah, it certainly would not apply here. How could you possibly find an application other than a highly allegorical one at this point?

But the story moves right on forward. We know now that the parents have favorites. Jacob cooked a stew, and Esau came in from the field and he was eager to eat.

He was exhausted. Esau said to Jacob, "Please feed me with that same red stew." And this is so interesting.

I wish we all knew Hebrew. We could just study this all in Hebrew. But Esau comes in and says, "Please feed me some of that red stuff." This red stuff.

You can see that this is a real, you know, the account can back up and say here's the general pattern of life. And now we've zoomed in for a close-up and we're in Jacob's tent. Esau comes in.

He's at the end of a long day of hill and dale tracking, and he's come back empty-handed. He didn't catch anything. Didn't get a rabbit.

Didn't get any sort of game. He's exhausted. He's worn himself to the limits of his endurance.

He's hot. He's sweaty. He's thirsty.

And this exhaustion, when you study it out elsewhere in Scripture, is far more the result of exertion and thirst than it is of actual hunger. This is the result of his immediate exertions on this day. And so he's basically very thirsty.

He's very hot. And he's come in and he wants something liquid. He wants something that will give him some sustenance.

And probably from outside as he walks back into the camp and he smells this glorious smell, this red stew. What is it that made the stew red? We don't know if it contained red meat.

We don't know what it was that made it red. But once again you have this red being attracted to red. Esau is the man of red.

His name means red. He's red all over. He's got red hair.

It's interesting in later mythology and in later cultures, red was thought to be kind of a bad color. In fact, if you look at medieval paintings of the disciples of Jesus, when you get to Judas, they paint him with red hair. All the others have black hair, but Judas will have red hair because it was kind of associated with rebelliousness or with evil.

The Irish are famous for having red hair. They're typically known for their quick tempers and scrappy fighting all the time. This goes back well into history.

And this redness is associated with Esau for whatever reason. But the stew itself is red. And you get the idea that this is not a happenstance.

When reading this account, it comes across that this is a planned maneuver. This is by way of a snare that Jacob has laid for his brother. This is a well-thought-out premeditated event.

This is not just a happenstance. One of the reasons we know this is Esau comes in. He is a creature of habit.

This is the pattern of his life. Jacob observes this. Jacob knows this.

Jacob knows one of these days Esau is going to come back empty-handed. And being the ravenous beast of a man that he is, he's going to be at his most vulnerable. Jacob knows his brother inside out.

They're twins. They've grown up together. And he knows when Esau is at his most vulnerable.

When he comes back empty-handed from a long hunt, he'll agree to just about anything. He's very compliant. And he also knows that his brother, being a man of the fields, doesn't care anything about the domestic life.

And to him, the birthright and the portion of the firstborn son has to do with everything that sits there in the camp. That's everything Esau is dissatisfied with. That's why he's constantly out, away.

He's away from the family, away from the encampment, away from the drudgery of animals and flocks and herds and agreements and leases and so forth. He's a man of adventure. He wants to be out with the chase and the stimulation and the hunt.

And he'll exhaust himself in that. And when he comes back, all he cares about is feeding his appetites. He doesn't care anything about the domestic life.

Jacob knows this. This is not a happenstance. Jacob has planned every step of this.

Jacob has made this fragrant stew. It's a red stew because he's made it for his brother to appeal to his brother. That's why the stew is in the tent.

On cue, Esau walks in, hot, exhausted, compliant, ready for anything. "Please feed me with that stew. This stew."

He repeats it twice. He says, "Please feed me some of this. This here.

This red stuff here. I am exhausted." Therefore his name was called Edom.

And Edom, once again, is a play on the word red. But Jacob said, and there is no preliminary, there's no N-A-H. Remember that? Nah.

"I pray you," that God uses with Abraham, or that is used in the terms of request that sort of means please in Hebrew. It's not here. Jacob's speech here is about three words in Hebrew.

This is a pre-planned, this is the spring of the trap coming across. Jacob says, "Sell me your birthright as of this day." And the term to me, which is li, L means to, E means me, is in the emphatic position.

It's all out of order here. He says, "You sell to me this day your right of the firstborn." And it's three words.

Esau says, "Look, I'm about to die." He's not about to die. He's been in this condition dozens of times.

But he's a man of sensual nature. And he's operating on his feelings, and right now he feels like he can't go another step or take another breath until he gets something into his body. Esau says, "Look, I'm about to die.

What is this birthright to me?" What's the point of having a birthright if you don't live to enjoy it? It's sort of his flippant remark. So Jacob says, "Swear to me as of this day." And Jacob is persistent.

His speech is clipped. This is all real short and abrupt in Hebrew. It's striking how demanding it is.

It's premeditated. He's rehearsed this. He's gone over it in his mind.

And Esau complies, as Jacob knew he would. He swore to him and sold his birthright to Jacob. This, by the way, is not an out-of-the-ordinary thing.

In the ancient Near East, this was a doable thing. Brothers would sell their birthright, usually in exchange for far more than this. But it was a thing that could be sold.

It was a commodity and it could be brokered. It could be sold. It could be, in some cases, bought back in other families.

But because this birthright carries with it spiritual connotation and is a part of covenant with God, this is something once you give it away, you can't get it back. He swore to him and sold his birthright to Jacob. And Jacob gave Esau bread and a stew of lentils.

I have to tell you, a lentil stew is not red. And you get the idea here that this was a bait and switch. Apparently, this stew of lentils is not the red stew that attracted Esau into the tent.

It doesn't appear to be the same thing. Have any of you all ever cooked lentils or ever bought lentils or used them in anything? Have you ever seen them? Are they red? They're not.

Typically, lentil soup is kind of a thin sort of a thing. Lentils are not all that substantial. That's why they sort of make fun of Buddhists and things living on lentils.

They're kind of insubstantial. Esau comes in with his ravenous thirst and exhaustion. And he's attracted into the tent by the smell of this.

You get the idea that this was a beefy, red, fragrant aroma type of—I think a spaghetti sauce when I think of this stew. I'd probably sell my birthright for my mom's spaghetti sauce. And so Jacob lures him in with this, succeeds in establishing the bargain, and then gives him what you would get if you were in prison, bread and lentil soup.

And you get the idea that even as this bargain is transacted, the subterfuge becomes apparent because it's as though Jacob didn't even have to give him the good stew to get this, whether there was any further bargaining or whatever else. But this stew of lentils does not appear to be the same thing as the red stew, the aroma of which drew Esau into Jacob's tent to begin with. Lentils just aren't red.

I don't know if it was the same. It's odd that the Scripture says it's a stew of lentils because that's not typically a red stew. So he ate and drank and arose and went his way.

Thus Esau despised his birthright. And this is kind of a moral commentary that gets interjected by the narrator here, isn't it? We're used to the story just flowing forward and kind of drawing our conclusions from the events.

But here the narrator steps in and says, "Thus Esau despised his birthright." And this is in there by way of emphasis, by way of clarification, that this was a very light treatment of something that should have meant everything to Esau. It was his possession and he gave it away.

In the realm of spiritual interpretation, we have to remember here that this is not something that he could have had but never possessed. It's something that he had and gave away. And it is often the case in the Word of God that when it comes time for interpretation, people will split the blanket between believers and unbelievers and they'll say, well, Isaac was a believer.

Ishmael was an unbeliever. Jacob was a believer. Esau was an unbeliever.

But when you look at the details of the story, to be an accurate analogy or an accurate illustration, an unbeliever has never possessed relationship with God or the things of God, cannot rightfully be called a son of God. You go to John 1:12: "As many as received Him," Jesus Christ, "to them He gave authority to be called sons of God, even to them that believe on His name."

You can't be called a son unless you're a believer. Unbelievers are not sons of God. Nowhere in Scripture, Old Testament or New, will you find unbelievers called sons of God.

And we are too quick to flatten and to stereotype portions of Scripture when they serve as illustrations and say, well, the bad guy, he's standing in for the unbelievers. Esau does not represent an unbeliever. He represents a believer who does not value what he has been given, what is his by right of birth.

Ishmael does not represent an unbeliever. He represents a believer who had something by right of birth but gives it away. And you say, well, but he never had the birthright of Isaac.

That's true, but he had the opportunity to receive blessing. He was given gifts. He comes back and buries his father.

He has a promise from God that's iterated twice. Hagar is given an angelic message on two different occasions and there's a covenant promise from God regarding Ishmael. Ishmael has the opportunity to be blessed and be a blessing, but he is a pale shadow because look at his choices.

Who does Isaac marry? Somebody from his own people. Who does Ishmael marry? Someone from his mother's people, the land of Egypt. And it's these choices.

And we're going to see this further amplified when we get into the life and the choices of Esau here. But you can already see Esau kind of falling into the camp of Ishmael, identifying himself with the type of choice that is outside the plan and the purpose of God. Thus Esau despised his birthright.

So this takes place and the immediate consequence doesn't seem to be that great. And this is something we have to remember by way of application. We as believers make our choices, and there may not be an immediate—it's not like the disciplinary hand of God descends upon us at the moment that we get distracted, at the moment that we take lightly our calling or our gifts in this life.

Things can go on situation normal for some time after that, and we're going to see that there's a gap between verse 34 of 25 and the beginning of chapter 26. Weeks and months and perhaps years pass with no seeming change. Esau still goes out and hunts.

Jacob continues to dwell in the tents of his father Isaac and be a stay-at-home kind of guy, content to remain there in the dwellings, in the tents. Seems like business as usual, but something has changed as a result of this transaction in the tent, and it will out, it will become apparent. And there's going to come a time when Esau is going to be crying as a grown man because of what he has done in this far earlier day.

And it's important for us to remember that it shouldn't take consequences, it shouldn't take the disciplinary hand of God descending on us to motivate us to pay attention to who we are and why we're here, what our birthright is, what our calling and our place in the plan of God is. Hopefully, and we find that balance, we saw Mackintosh earlier talking about this morbid introspection that people get into, and he says, reminds us that's not the leading of the Spirit. The Spirit motivates us to look at Christ.

But at the same time we have the responsibility to examine ourselves, to see if we're in the faith, to see if the things that we are pursuing and that we are prioritizing are in fact consistent with and in keeping with our identity and our calling. Esau, no matter how hungry—the Lord Jesus is going to illustrate this much later, isn't

He? Out in the wilderness for 40 days with no food, someone offers Him the opportunity to turn stones into bread, and what does He say? "I've got a higher calling. I know who I am, I know why I'm here.

Man doesn't live by bread alone, it's every rhema, it's everything, every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God." Jesus never forgot who He was and why He's here, and that sustained Him through great trials even when He was far more weary than Esau after a day of hunting, far more susceptible to temptation, but He never lost His focus, and that's the thing to remember for us.

The other thing that we cannot help but notice, and we'll see this in more detail as we go forward in the story, is Jacob basically obtains this by subterfuge, and he's going to get the fulfillment of it, as we know, by subterfuge and by deceit. But God can turn cursing to blessing, God can work everything together for good, and it isn't always how you got to the place where you are that counts. It's what are you going to do with it now that you're there?

And the wonderful reminder that we have, and it's illustrated here, even as we see Jacob stealing this birthright, he's going to steal it at the beginning, he's going to steal it at the end under the hands of blessing that Isaac extends, but God doesn't go back and say, "Well, you stepped on the out-of-bounds line here, so the whole deal is off, the touchdown is invalid, we're going to call back the whole play." Rather surprisingly, God picks up Jacob where he is and blesses him where he is, and God will actually honor the blessing that he obtains by deceit and by trickery and by subterfuge.

And that's something we're going to deal with and have to wrestle with a little bit because it's not immediately apparent why God would seem to validate, if you will, what seem to be dishonest and immoral acts in the obtaining of these blessings. So I submit that to you for your meditations until we get a little further in the story, but you can see the seeds of it here when it says Jacob is grasping the heel, he's coming from behind. Is he going to use human means to obtain the fulfillment of God's promises?

God has already promised that the elder will serve the younger and that the nations that proceed from them are going to sort themselves out, but here Jacob seems to be forcing it. He seems to be accomplishing it all in his own efforts. How does that work itself out, and is that any kind of a pattern for us?

What can we learn from that? Well, that's what we have to look forward to as we continue our study next time, beginning in Genesis chapter 26. But let's close here in prayer.

Father, we thank You for the privilege of studying Your Word. We thank You for the preservation and communication of these things to us. We know that all these things were written for our instruction, and we pray that God the Holy Spirit will instruct us and teach us not only the knowledge of these things but the wisdom that springs from it so that we can live our lives and make our decisions in a way that is pleasing in Your sight and glorifying to our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.