

ISAAC'S WELLS

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**GENESIS 24; 25:11; 26:1-6,
12-33; GALATIANS 4:28-31**

The book of Genesis is a book of biographies. In other words, God is not so much interested in doctrines, in teachings, in methods, or in many other things, but He is interested in man. It is the biography of eight persons, and it reveals to us what God has done in the lives of these men. These men show us the man that God is really after, and He did find that man in Christ Jesus. Now He is going to find Him in His church—that corporate man.

In each of these men God has done a work that is expressed with a symbol, almost like a trademark. We mentioned Adam's *tree*, Abel's *sacrifice*, Enoch's *heaven*, Noah's *ark*, and Abraham's *altar*. Next is Isaac, and without doubt, the symbol of Isaac's life was *wells*. His life was connected with wells. Throughout his life he dug many wells, just like Abraham built altars. Altar is symbolic of Abraham and wells are symbolic of Isaac. As a matter of fact, he found his wife at a well.

In Genesis 24, the servant of Abraham went to find a wife for Isaac. His servant stood by a well and prayed that if any maiden should come and when he asked for water, she would not only give him water to drink, but also his camels. That would be the woman God had chosen

for his master's son. Sure enough, Rebecca came and did that very thing.

So, Isaac's wife was found at a well, and he met her just after he had returned from Beer Lahai Roi. *Beer* in the Scripture means "well—well of lahai-roi." He began his life by living at Beer Lahai Roi. Later, he went to the land of the Philistines and dug the wells that his father had dug before him, but he dug new wells. Finally, he moved to Beersheba, and there he found another well of living water. *Beer* means "well—well of sheba." Throughout his life he dug many wells. That is symbolic of Isaac.

WELL OF LIVING WATER

We know what water represents in the Scripture. Sometimes water may represent something bad, like judgment, but many times water in the Scripture represents something that is very, very good. Water represents life, the spirit of life. You remember one day, when our Lord Jesus was by the well of Jacob, a Samaritan woman came out of the city to draw water from that well. Our Lord Jesus said to her, "If you know Who is talking with you if you will ask Him, He will give you living water. And that water will become in you a spring of water, and you will never be thirsty again" (see John 4:10). Of course, we know that the Lord offered Himself, His own life to that woman.

Then in John 7:38, on the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles,

our Lord Jesus stood on the high place and cried out saying, "If any one thirst, let him come to me and drink. He that believes on me, as the scripture has said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." This He spake of the Holy Spirit; so we know that the Holy Spirit is a Spirit of living water. He is a Spirit of life, the Spirit of living water. And God offers that life, that Spirit of life, to whoever will come and believe in Christ Jesus.

What is a well? What is the difference between a well and a river? A river is something that God has made; a well is something that man digs. God gives the water; the spring is there, but you have to dig to make a well so that the water may be preserved and drawn. This is the part that man must do. There is a part that God does. He gives water; He gives life; He gives the Spirit of life. But there is a part that we have to do, too. We have our responsibility. We have to dig. We have to clear the dirt. We have to prepare the emptiness so that the life of God, the Spirit of life may fill us, not only to quench our thirst but even to supply water, life to other people. This speaks of the experiential side of our life and this is something that we must do.

Isaac began his life at Beer Lahai Roi, at the well of Lahai Roi. If you are acquainted with the book of Genesis, you know that one day when Hagar was persecuted by her mistress, Sa-

rah, she fled, and she found herself in the wilderness. God appeared to her and asked her, "Hagar, what are you doing here?"

And Hagar answered, "My mistress oppressed me; therefore I fled."

God said, "Go back; submit yourself, and you shall bear a son and his name shall be called Ishmael, and he will be blessed."

God appeared to Hagar by a well, so Hagar called that well *Beer Lahai Roi* which means the well of the living God who revealed Himself, or the well of the living God who was seen."

Isaac lived with his father, but when he began his own life, he began at Beer Lahai Roi. In other words, he made that the beginning of his own life. It means that he saw he had to begin his life with the living God who revealed Himself. He had to draw all his resources from God. How did he draw his resources from God? He drew when God revealed to him. So, spiritually speaking, this is the place where Isaac began his life.

Isn't it true that this is where we ought to begin our own life, too? We have to begin our life with the living God. We have to begin our life with revelation that comes from God. Without revelation, if God does not reveal to us, we are dead; there is no life. But when God reveals Himself to us, we find that He is a living God and in Him we find life. This is where life must begin.

If a person has never seen God, if a person has never received revelation from above,

he is dead. Just like the Lord Jesus said, "Let the dead bury the dead." Or as the Scripture says, "You were dead in sins and transgressions," without revelation, without knowing the living God. Being separated from the living God is death. That is spiritual death, and that is what we were before. But thank God, one day it pleased God to reveal His Son in us; and when that revelation came to us, we saw the living God and we received that life into us. This is where our real life begins. Remember, if you do not begin with revelation from the living God, your life has not begun. But if you begin with that revelation of the living God, God will reveal Himself to you. Then remember that you have to continue living in that revelation. It does not mean that once upon a time you have such a revelation, you see the living God and you draw life from Him, but then you stop. We have to continue to drink out of that well; we have to continue to draw life, water from God. And every time we draw life from God, it is through revelation. Isn't it true that whenever God reveals to us afresh we find life again, again, and again. That is where Isaac began.

ISAAC REDIGS THE WELLS

But then Isaac was tested. Our life on earth will be tested. Abraham was tested, and in the same manner his son Isaac was tested. There was famine in the Promised Land. Abraham went down into Egypt to escape the

famine, and so did Isaac. Isn't it strange that the son always follows the footsteps of the father? What a responsibility for the father! Remember, your son is following your footsteps.

When the famine came, Isaac was thinking of going to Egypt, so God warned him not to go to Egypt, but to stay in the land of promise. So Isaac did not go to Egypt, but he moved to the south country. In other words, he moved into the land of the Philistines, to Gerar. (The land of the Philistines still belonged to the land of promise, but the Philistines occupied that place.) He did not go to Egypt, thank God for that, but he committed the same fault as his father Abraham. He told a lie. He told his wife not to tell people that she was his wife but to say that she was his sister because he was afraid of the Philistines. He thought that because they did not know God or fear God, probably they would do something to him because of his wife. For this he was rebuked by Abimelech the king of the Philistines. Now, that was a fault.

But when he was in the land of the Philistines, he began to sow, he began to plant. Isaac was not only a farmer, he was also a herdsman. Because he was a farmer and a herdsman, water was the most important thing, especially when he dwelt in the south land in the desert. That is why he had to dig well after well after well because he needed water. Physically speaking, he needed water because he was a farmer and a

herdsman. But of course there is a spiritual significance, not just a physical supply. There must be spiritual meaning to these wells, and that is what we are trying to find out.

When Isaac was in Gerar and planted, God blessed him and he had a hundred fold. He became great, greater, and very great, and the Philistines envied him. Do you know who the Philistines were? The Philistines also came out of Africa, just like the children of Israel came out of Egypt. When the children of Israel came out of Egypt, they had the Passover lamb; they crossed the Red Sea, and they entered into the promised land. But when the Philistines came out of Africa, they did not have the Passover; they did not cross the Red Sea. As a matter of fact, they went to Canaan by dry ground. They occupied the place between Egypt and Canaan in the southern part and they dwelt there. So the Philistines in the Scripture represent the flesh, while the Israelites represent the spirit. That which is of the flesh came first and then that which is of the spirit. So the Philistines got to the Promised Land before the Israelites, but they did not have the Passover lamb nor did they cross the Red Sea. In other words, they did not know God. But the children of Israel had the Passover lamb and they crossed the Red Sea. It was God who brought them to the Promised Land. So in typology, the Philistines represent the flesh, the natural, while the Israelites represent the spirit, the supernatural, the spiritual.

Isaac is in the land of the Philistines. And because God was with him, he prospered and the Philistines envied him. That is always the story. The flesh always envies the spirit and the spirit lusts against the flesh, as we find in Galatians 5. The flesh and the spirit can never be at peace. When the spirit begins to be blessed, then the flesh envies. As a matter of fact, Abimelech and his people really hated Isaac because he was blessed of God. For this reason Isaac moved out of Gerar and went to the valley of Gerar. *Gerar* means "rolling country," and from the root it also means "to ruminate, to chew the cud." Gerar is a rolling country, up and down, up and down.

Isaac dwelt in the valley of Gerar in that rolling country, and he began to dig the wells that his father had dug before. Abraham had lived in the land of the Philistines before and he had dug many wells. But after he left, the Philistines filled all the wells with dirt. They did not want those wells, so they filled them up. Isaac came and redug the wells. He opened up the wells that his father dug because he needed water. And he called these wells by the name his father called them.

Our spiritual life must be sustained by the supply of the Holy Spirit. We have life, but this life of the spirit needs the supply of the Holy Spirit. If it is not supplied with the Holy Spirit, our life will become thirsty, and it will become weak. That is why you have to dig wells in order to get more

supply Isaac dug all the wells that his father had dug before.

SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCES

Every one of us must have our own spiritual experience. We must dig wells; we must clear dirt; we must empty ourselves in order that we may experience the filling of the Holy Spirit, that we may experience the Spirit of life. Our forefathers, our fathers experienced, the life of God. They had the experience of the Holy Spirit and, oftentimes, we have to rediscover these wells that they have already dug. If we have to experience all our spiritual experiences originally, that is from scratch, I do not know how many spiritual experiences we will have in our lifetime. But thank God, those who have gone before us have experienced God in many ways. Even though these wells have been filled by the Philistines, it is much easier to redig the wells than to dig a new well. In other words, how often we find either by reading or by hearing the experiences and the revelations that those who have gone before us have seen and have known, the Spirit of God helps us to rediscover and reopen those wells. When we hear about it or we read about it, we enter into the experiences that they have experienced, but in a much quicker and much easier way. We thank God for that.

In one sense, we are not original. We receive from all those to whom God has given. These are our Christian heritage.

We receive from Peter, from Paul, from John. We receive from Augustine, from Martin Luther, from Wesley, from T. Austin Sparks, from all those saints that have gone before us. They have dug and found the wells. They have found the living water, but unfortunately, the Philistines have filled them up. Thank God, we rediscover them! But when we rediscover them, remember that we need to do a little digging, too. It is not just a matter of hearing and reading. That will not give us their experiences. But as we read, as we hear, the Spirit of God begins to work in us and we begin to cooperate by digging, by clearing out the dirt that has been filled in our hearts. As we do, we experience what our forefathers have experienced first-hand. It is true it is handed down to us, but we experience it first-hand. It is not just a second-hand theory. It is a first-hand experience, but it is a much quicker and easier experience.

ISAAC DIGS NEW WELLS

However, that is not enough. Isaac not only redug all the wells that Abraham dug and called them the names that his father called them, but in the valley of Gerar he dugged new wells. In other words, what we have received from our forefathers is good for us, but it is not enough. We have to have new experiences. Every generation should add something more. Our generation should be richer than the former generation and the generation to

come should be richer than we are. That is what it should be. We are still reading books that were written in the sixth century or in the sixteenth century or in the eighteen century or in the nineteenth century. We are still receiving much help from them. But at the same time, we find lots of things that are out of date. So we have to dig new wells.

Isaac digged new wells, but every time he dug a well the Philistines quarreled with him and said, "This well is ours," and they took it away from him. So he called this first new well *Esek*, "quarrel." Then he dug another new well and they quarreled over it again, and he called it *Sitnah*, "opposition"; but he did not stop digging just because he met opposition. No, he had to continue to dig, and he digged a third well. This time they did not contend over that well, and he called it *Rehoboth*, "broad way." In other words, the conflict between the spirit and the flesh is continual.

THE CONFLICT OF SPIRIT AND FLESH

Isn't it true that after we have received life, the living water, the Spirit of life in us, we find that there is a conflict going on in our lives between the spirit and the flesh? The spirit wants to receive more abundant supply of the Holy Spirit, that it may live before God, but the flesh always comes in and tries to drag the spirit off roughly, as it were, like a rolling country. The flesh will come in and try to

drag you off and deprive you of the supply of the Holy Spirit, try to starve you, try to dry you up. We find that the conflict is going on all the time in our lives. We discover some old wells of our fathers and how happy we are, but the enemy will come and try to fill them up. Or we dig up new wells and how joyful we are, but they try to quarrel with us and take them away from us. The spirit lusts after the flesh and the flesh lusts after the spirit. You find a continuous war between the spirit and the flesh.

I do not know how often you feel you are being roughly handled and dragged off, but do not be disappointed or in despair. We know that Gerar also means "ruminate, to chew the cud." In other words, when we are going through these painful experiences of being dragged off roughly and all these conflicts, remember, it gives us opportunity to chew the cud. That is to say, through all the experiences we begin to ponder, we begin to meditate, we begin to think, and we begin to chew the cud. We begin to learn the lesson that we need to learn. How will you learn the lesson if you have never been roughly handled? Thank God for that, and because of that you get stronger and stronger. Do not give up; continue to dig. And if you continue to dig, you will come to a place when it will not be contended. The spirit gets stronger and stronger until the flesh says, "Well, it gets impossible." You come to a

broad way, and that is the experience we must have.

Are you still in that stage of being roughly pulled off? Do you find in your life that conflict between the spirit and the flesh? In Galatians 5 it says, "The spirit lusts against the flesh and the flesh lusts against the spirit, that you cannot do what you want to do." This is very different from Romans 6 or 7. In Romans 7 it says that what you want to do, you cannot do and what you do not want to do you do. The flesh is just too much for you, as Melancthon that reformer said, "The old Adam is too much for young Melancthon." And how often we find that the flesh is just too much for the spirit. The spirit wants to do, but the flesh says, "No." The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak. The spirit does not want to do, but the flesh says, "Do it!" Oh, how we find we are in trouble! But remember, Galatians 5 says that the spirit lusts after the flesh and the flesh lusts after the spirit and you cannot do what you want to do. It means what the flesh wants to do, the flesh cannot do because the spirit has overcome. Glorious! It is true, there is a conflict between the spirit and the flesh, but do not give up. Keep on. Keep on digging, keep on seeking for the supply of the Holy Spirit, and the flesh will be weakened as the spirit gets stronger and stronger. That should be our experience.

THE WELL OF OATH

Isaac did not stay in Gerar

because Gerar was still the land of the Philistines. Isaac moved again. He moved from Gerar to Beersheba. *Beer* means "well, well of sheba." We do not know whether Jacob was born at Beersheba, but we do know that when he left home he left from Beersheba. So we find that Isaac moved and stayed in Beersheba. Isaac experienced what his father had experienced before him. Isn't that strange? Abraham had the same experience. He sojourned in the land of the Philistines; he became great; he moved to Beersheba; and Abimelech the king of the Philistines came to him and made a covenant with him. He said, "We know you are blessed of God. God is with you, therefore we want to make a covenant." So, that place is called *sheba*—"oath." And while they were taking that oath, that covenant, Abraham put seven ewe lambs by the one side. Abimelech wanted to know why he did that, and Abraham said, "I digged a well and these lambs will be approved that it belongs to me. So *sheba* also means "seven." Now, that happened with Abraham and it happened with Isaac again.

Isaac moved to Beersheba, and God appeared to him. God said, "I will bless you. You will be great." There Isaac built an altar. That was the only altar Isaac ever built. He put his tent there, and his servants came to him and said, "We found living water." So, you find three things in the life of Isaac—the altar, the tent, and the well. The altar, to

put it in New Testament terms, is the cross. The tent is the house of God. The well is the Spirit of the living God. He has the cross, he has the house of God, and he has the Spirit of the living God.

Abimelech the king of the Philistines came to him there, and Isaac said, "Why do you come? You hated me; you drove me away." Abimelech said, "We know that God is with you. Therefore, we want to make peace with you. Let us have peace that you will not do anything against us and we have not done anything against you." So they made an oath, a covenant, and on the very same day, Isaac's servants came to him and said, "We have found living water." Therefore he called it *Beer-sheba*, the well of "oath" or the well of "seven."

What is seven? The number seven is the number of completeness, as the number twelve is eternal completeness. The number seven is completeness of this age. So, I do believe that this well of Beersheba which is the well of seven or the well of oath means that when God makes an oath it is doubly sure because our God never lies. He does not need to take an oath, but when God takes an oath, it is doubly assured. And it is not only an oath between Isaac and the Philistines, but it is also God's promise that He will bless it. I think of this as the fulness of the Spirit. First, we experience the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. When we believed in the Lord

Jesus, the Holy Spirit came into us and dwelt in our spirit. And there He witnessed with us that we are children of God.

THE FULNESS OF THE SPIRIT

We who believe in the Lord Jesus have the Holy Spirit within us, but because the Holy Spirit dwells in our spirit, we have a civil war within us. The spirit and the flesh begin to strive with each other, and thank God, gradually the spirit gets the ascendancy. Then we move on into a life of the fulness of the Spirit. Fulness of the Spirit is a state of life. It is not just a second experience. It is a continuous state as Ephesians 5 says: "Be not drunk with wine . . . but be filled with the Spirit." Be continuously filled with the Holy Spirit in a state of the fulness of the Spirit, that is seven-fold. God has promised us that we should have a life full of the Holy Spirit, maintained in the fulness of the Spirit, being filled all the time. It means being controlled by the Holy Spirit all the time. Our whole life is under the rule of the Holy Spirit. That is what Beer-sheba represents. And when you come to that point, the spirit and the soul begin to make peace with each other.

DIVISION OF SOUL AND SPIRIT

In our spiritual experience there must be the division of the spirit and the soul. In Hebrews 4 we find that the word of God is living and operative. It is powerful. It penetrates, it separates and it divides the spirit

and the soul. The spirit and the soul must be divided because the Spirit of God is in our spirit. The Spirit of God is the life of our spirit, while in our soul is Adam, the self-life. Self is the life of the soul. Therefore, in our spiritual experience, we have to go through a stage where the spirit and the soul must be separated. If the spirit and the soul are not divided, they remain mixed up together. That is why all our spiritual experiences, our spiritual services, and our works are so mixed. There is something of God and lots of self in it. It is very, very mixed, and that is the reason you have to have the spirit and the soul divided.

It is just like the holiest of all is separated from the holy place by a heavy veil. But one day, when the spirit gets into such fulness, then the veil is rent and the glory of the Lord will not only fill the holiest of all, but even fill the holy place. In other words, the soul will come and make peace with the spirit. The soul will lay itself at the feet of the spirit and say, "I am your servant; I am willing to do what you want me to do." There will be cooperation. This is the fulness of the spirit. When we enter into the fulness of the spirit, it does not mean that the Spirit is confined in our spirit. No. The Holy Spirit is able to penetrate and permeate our whole soul and transform our soul. The result is that we will have the mind of Christ, we will be constrained by the love of God, and we will choose the will of God—"Not my will but Your

will be done." There is a covenant; there is a union of the spirit and the soul, a reunion.

The spirit and the soul must be divided, but after they are divided, they will be reunited. And when they are reunited, then the soul will keep its place instead of trying to raise its head, to rule over us. The soul is willing to be that steward under the rule of the master, the spirit, and to cooperate and work for God. So in our experience of the Holy Spirit, we have to enter finally into that stage, the fulness of the spirit. The soul becomes so obedient, so willing to carry out the will of the spirit, the Spirit of God. Glorious!

This is the life of Isaac. Therefore, in Galatians we are told, "Today, after the pattern of Isaac." We are after the pattern of Isaac. Therefore, we are the children of promise, but even like Isaac, who was mocked by Ishmael, that which is born of the spirit will be persecuted by that which is born of the flesh. But what does God say? "Cast out the maid and her son because he cannot inherit with the son of promise." the flesh will be cast out and the spirit will be in ascendancy and that is after the pattern of Isaac. So may the Lord help us.