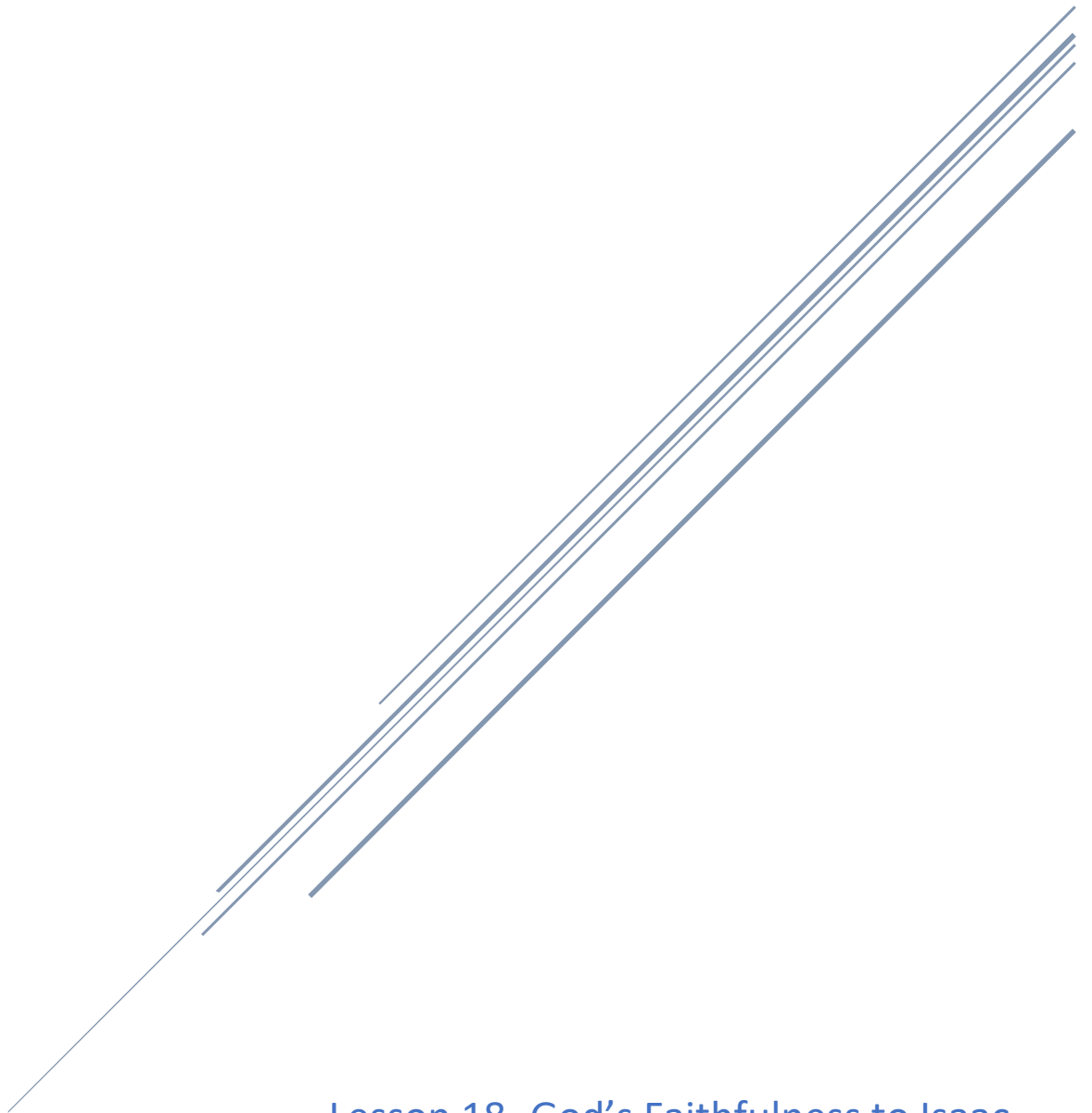


# THE KINGDOM, THE BIBLE, & US

Understanding the Bible's story, Jesus' importance, and Our place in God's plan



Lesson 18- God's Faithfulness to Isaac  
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## Introduction

We have started looking at Isaac's life. Abraham has died and God has carried on the promise of Abraham to Isaac. God is moving into the next phase of His plan to bring about redemption and bring rebel sinners back into His Kingdom. Remember our study is about the Bible as one big story. This story seems to be about the Kingdom of God.

What we truly focused on last lesson was the concept of God's Providence. It is the idea of talking about how God *provides* for His creation. God sees to it that He cares for His creation. He has set up processes that carry out functions within nature, space, etc. These *natural* processes were supernaturally arranged by God.

The other part of God's providence is His ability to carry out His will. This is called God's *governance* over His creation to carry out His purposes. God has plans, these plans will not be stopped. God uses supernatural means to carry out His will that may appear to us to be natural means.

We explored the idea that while it is not an excuse to sin, even our sin cannot thwart God's plans. We brought this up because in the story of Jacob and Esau we clearly see God at work. God can work through sinful actions to accomplish His will. It may look like the situation in Isaac's family is out of control on a human level; but at God's level He is in control carrying out His plans.

God has chosen Jacob over Esau to carry on the promise of Abraham and Isaac. The promise to form a nation. The boys have taken the sinful path rather than trusting God to carry out the plans in a holy manner. Despite the sinful actions, God's plans are not overthrown.

We ended with the brief event of Jacob bartering for Esau's birthright. We explored how both men were at fault. Hebrews told us Esau was showing he was a man of the world and not of God. Jacob showed he is living up to his name as the supplanter.

In this lesson we will see how God is faithful to Isaac, just as He was to Abraham. We will also see Isaac make some of the same mistakes his father did. Jacob and Esau cause more trouble within the family as well. Despite all this, God remains faithful to this family because of the promise He made to Abraham.

As we go through the rest of the story of this family, take note of how God works through the natural (human actions) to accomplish the supernatural (His will).

## God's Faithfulness to Isaac (Just Like He was to Abraham)

### God Confirms the Promise of Abraham to Isaac

#### **Genesis 26:1-5**

Another famine occurs in the land, like in the days of Abraham. Isaac goes to Abimelech, like Abraham also had done. Abraham went on to Egypt, but this time God intervenes and halts Isaac from traveling all the way down to Egypt and thus leaving the Promised Land.

It says the Lord appeared to Isaac and commanded him not to go down to Egypt. God wants Isaac to only live in the land He tells Isaac to. God promises to Isaac that He will be with Isaac and bless him. Towards the end of verse three God says, "I will establish the oath I swore to Abraham your father."

God confirmed the same promise made to Abraham was officially transferred to Isaac. God repeats the same promise made to Abraham to Isaac in verse four. God will make Isaac's descendants as many as the stars of heaven. Through the offspring of Isaac all the nations of the earth shall be blessed.

The basis for this covenant being transferred to Isaac is due to Abraham's faithfulness to the Lord. God says in verse five it is because Abraham obeyed the voice of God and kept His laws. Abraham was not perfect as we have seen, but he was a man of immense faithfulness to God.

### Like Father Like Son

#### Isaac Repeats Abraham's Lie

#### **Genesis 26:6-11**

Isaac settled in the land of Gerar just like Abraham did (see Genesis 20:1). Isaac told the same lie Abraham once did in this land. Isaac feared he would be killed by other men and his wife taken if he told the truth about her. He lied and said she is his sister.

As the saying is sometimes used, like father like son. Isaac is following in his father's steps literally and spiritually.

After much time passed it says one day king Abimelech looked out a window and saw Isaac and Rebekah engaging in some sort of intimate affection. Abimelech knew that Isaac had lied to them about Rebekah.

The English Standard Version translates the Hebrew word used to describe their action as *laughing with*. This is not the best way to understand this word in this verse. The word can mean laughing, but it can also mean intimate embrace. The New King James Version translates this word as *showing endearment*. The New American Standard Bible and Christian Standard Bible translate it as *caressing*.

We can safely say that the better way to understand this word in Genesis 26:8 is that Isaac engaged in some type of intimate affection with Rebekah, such as kissing or caressing. Abimelech clearly got the message that the two were not brother and sister.

Abimelech confronts Isaac and he admits to the lie. Abimelech issues a decree that if any man touches Isaac or Rebekah then Abimelech will see to it, they are killed.

### **Genesis 26:12-33**

Isaac was blessed greatly with wealth while he lived in the land of Gerar (Philistines) to the point king Abimelech asked him to move away from that territory because Isaac had become too mighty. The Philistines had become jealous of him. Verse fifteen says they stopped up the wells Abraham had dug when he lived there.

Isaac settled in the valley region and dug wells, but the Philistines argued with him that the water belonged to them. Isaac kept digging away from them until finally they stopped quarreling (see verse 22).

Verse twenty-three Isaac travels back to Beersheba. The Lord appears to him that night and confirms to him again the promise of Abraham. God promises to be with Isaac and bless him and multiply his offspring. In response to this, Isaac built an altar and called upon the Lord's name and lived there.

In Genesis 21:33 Abraham planted a tamarisk tree in Beersheba after his covenant with Abimelech and called on the name of the Lord there. Once again, **God shows His faithfulness to Isaac as He did to Abraham.**

Verses twenty-six through thirty-three record Abimelech deciding to make a covenant with Isaac, just like he did with Abraham. Abimelech acknowledges God is with Isaac and he wishes to have a formal covenant with Isaac and his descendants.

The same event happened with Abraham in Genesis 21:22. The place where Abraham and Abimelech made their covenant was called Beersheba. It is at this same place Isaac and Abimelech make another covenant.

It is interesting that these events we see with Isaac are nearly identical with what happened to Abraham. Abraham lied about Sarah being his sister. Abraham also made a covenant with king Abimelech.

Isaac has made mistakes, just like Abraham his father did, yet God is with Isaac just as He was with Abraham. God confirmed to Isaac that He is fulfilling the promises made to Abraham through him. God's Kingdom promise to bring about a Savior (from Genesis 3:15) is moving on through Isaac.

Why do you think God did not let Isaac go down to Egypt?

There is foreshadowing going on with Isaac's travels. God told Abraham all the places where his foot traveled, He would give to him and his descendants. Abraham and Isaac were both allowed to live in the land of the Philistines. They were not allowed to live in Egypt for long. This is setting the stage later on for the conquest of the Promised Land under Joshua.

## Trouble in the Family

### Esau Marries Canaanite Women

#### **Genesis 26:34-35**

We enter a part of the story in Genesis that shows the trouble both of Isaac's sons cause for him and the family. As we go through this portion, it is important for us to notice how God will work through these sinful actions to still carry out His plans to form a nation to bless all families of the earth.

Genesis 26:34 says Esau took two wives for himself. The interesting feature about these two women is they are Hittites. The Hittites were one of the tribes of the Canaanites. Remember that Abraham was very specific to ensure Isaac had a wife from their home people, outside of the Canaanite tribes. Abraham wanted the family lineage to stay away from intermarrying with the Canaanite peoples.

These were wicked people. They had many pagan practices, one of which was burning some of their babies on altars in sacrifice to their gods. This does not mean each Canaanite practiced this, but it speaks to how wicked they could be.

Also, Abraham probably knew about Noah's prophetic curse pronounced on Canaan and his descendants.

Genesis 9:18-27 records the main problematic event. Noah became drunk and passed out in his tent naked. Ham, one of his sons, *saw his father's nakedness*. There is

debate as to what exactly Ham did to Noah. The context of the passage leads us to believe Ham did much more than simply accidentally see his father naked. Ham probably had perverted intentions.

Whatever Ham did to Noah it was not good. When Noah heard what happened he pronounced a prophetic curse on Ham and his descendants. Canaan was the son of Ham, and he is specifically mentioned as being cursed and bound to become a slave to his brothers, specifically the descendants of Shem.

Genesis 11:10-32 records the genealogy from Shem, Noah's oldest son, to Abraham. Abraham comes from the family lineage of Shem. Abraham was in the ninth generation of Shem's family. Abraham comes from the people of Shem who are said to rule over the people of Canaan in their curse.

It is very likely that Abraham knew about all of this, and it makes sense why Abraham did not want his family intermarrying with the Canaanites. It was probably unthinkable to Abraham for the bloodlines of Canaanites and Shemites to mix.

Esau chose to ignore this curse and the displeasure Isaac and Rebekah had with the Canaanites. He opted to intermarry with the Canaanites. It is said these wives made life bitter for Isaac and Rebekah.

Why do you think Esau did this? Why do you think he had such disregard for the wishes of Abraham and Isaac? What does this tell us about his character?

### Jacob's Deception for the Inheritance

If Esau's troubling wives wasn't enough of a problem for Isaac, his other son Jacob lies to him to steal the promised blessings.

#### **Genesis 27:1-40**

Isaac is very old and can hardly see. He calls Esau in to carry out the formal blessing of father passing on to his first-born son the inheritance and rites over the family. He asks Esau to hunt and prepare some food he loves from Esau's game and Isaac will render the fatherly blessing to him as the first-born.

What is implicit in this blessing would also be the blessing from God to Abraham in Genesis 12. Isaac would be issuing a pronouncement on Esau to carry on that blessing for the family.

We don't need to only blame Jacob for his deception, it says in verses five through thirteen his mother Rebekah overheard Isaac's plan for Esau, and she devised the plan. Isaac is deceived by both his wife and son Jacob.

Jacob shows concern the plan could fail and he be cursed. Rebekah says she will take the curse upon herself (vs. 13).

Rebekah cooks the food for Isaac, then takes some of Esau's clothing and has Jacob go before Isaac presenting himself as if he is Esau. Verses eighteen through twenty-five record the deception.

Why do you think Rebekah put Jacob up to this and deceived her own husband?

Another question we should ask is, why was Isaac going to bless Esau when God had already said the younger would be over the older? (Gen. 25:23)

Remember God had already decreed that the younger (Jacob) would be master over the older (Esau). God shared this with Rebekah in Gen. 25:23. We do not know for certain if Rebekah told Isaac this prophecy from God. It is probably she did tell him. If she told Isaac the prophecy, then why was Isaac going to bestow the blessing of Abraham on Esau?

Genesis 25:28 says Isaac loved, favored, Esau while Rebekah favored Jacob. They played favorites with the boys. Rebekah may have told Isaac about the prophecy, yet Isaac wanted to give the blessing to his favored son, Esau. Perhaps even against God's wishes. This is speculation we must admit, but it is very reasonable speculation.

The wording in Genesis 27:5 indicates Isaac made this plan to bless Esau on his own and did not bring Rebekah into it. Rebekah was listening to Isaac's plan without his knowledge.

If Rebekah told Isaac about the prophecy, then she may have panicked and figured she had to take matters into her own hands and ensure the prophecy came true for Jacob. This is sort of like the scenario with Sarah telling Abraham to have a child through Hagar. They wanted to *help* God out in a way that made sense to them.

On the other hand, Rebekah may have never told Isaac about the prophecy over the two boys. If this is the case, then Isaac was none the wiser and he was simply following the custom of the day to give the greater blessing to the first-born (Esau).

Rebekah would have been an even bigger deceiver in this scenario because she wanted to make sure her favorite son, Jacob, got the blessings of Isaac.

We cannot be dogmatic about if Rebekah told Isaac or not about the prophecy. In my opinion, she told Isaac. The reason I believe this is because of the wording in the flow the story.

Rebekah is told that Jacob will be master over the older brother Esau. I believe she shares this with Isaac. However, the Bible makes a point to tell us Isaac preferred Esau over Jacob. Then, it seems Isaac keeps Rebekah out of the loop when he decides to bless Esau with the promise of Abraham.

The details in the story indicate there is a little tug-of-war between Rebekah and Isaac just as between Jacob and Esau. I think Rebekah may have even told Jacob as a youngster about the prophecy. Jacob may have grown up knowing he was to be ruler over his brother.

This may explain why Jacob stiff armed Esau into selling his birthright to him. Jacob could have been raised by his mother knowing the prophecy God had made. It seems fitting for this family that they always try to *help* God out to make sure these promises come true.

[Isaac blesses Jacob thinking it is Esau](#)

### **Genesis 27:26-29**

Verse 29 is key. Isaac pronounces the promise God made to Abraham in Genesis twelve on to Jacob (whom he thinks is Esau). Isaac says other nations will bow down to Jacob. Jacob will be king over his brothers and his mother's sons will bow down to him. The same promise God gave to Abraham is now given to Jacob: cursed will be those who curse him and blessed are those who bless him.

What Isaac meant for Esau went to Jacob through the deception of Rebekah and Jacob.

### **Genesis 27:30-41**

Verse thirty says just as soon as Jacob left Isaac, Esau showed up with the game from the hunt. He prepared the food and entered to see Isaac to receive his first-born birthright blessing.

Isaac asked who he was, when he learns it was really Esau, it says Isaac shook as if he was convulsing because he was so distressed upon realizing what had happened. Isaac knew Jacob had come in and deceived him.



Verse thirty-six Esau affirms that Jacob's name truly must mean trickster and cheater because he has now tricked Esau twice out of his rightful inheritance. Esau asked Isaac for any secondary type blessing that remained for him. Isaac regretfully told Esau that the best of the blessing had went to Jacob and that Esau would be his servant.

Isaac pronounces a *blessing* over Esau, but it can hardly be called a blessing, more of a foreshadowing of the strife Esau will face. Isaac prophesies that Esau will live away from the best parts of the earth and its produce. He will live by his sword and serve his brother Jacob until he gets tired of it enough to fight back.

### Jacob Sent away to Uncle Laban

#### **Genesis 27:41-28:5**

Esau hates Jacob and let it slip to others that after Isaac died he intended to kill Jacob. Rebekah was told of the plot and she schemed a plan to get Jacob away from there to her brother Laban.

In verse forty-six she tells Isaac that she loathes the fact that Esau married the Hittite women. She reminds Isaac that if Jacob does the same thing it will be even worse for them. This goads Isaac to formally send Jacob away back to their home country where Rebekah and Abraham's families reside.

Isaac reminds Jacob he is not to marry a Canaanite woman (28:1). He is directly instructed to marry one of the daughters of his uncle Laban.

Let's take note of 28:4. Isaac declares over Jacob that God would give him the blessing of Abraham. He confirms to Jacob that he is the one to carry on the blessing of promise made to Abraham by God. It is to be Jacob's family, not Esau's, that inherits the promised land, that a nation will be formed through to send the Messiah to bless all families of the earth.

This is a clear event that God works through later on. Because of all the events that have just taken place, Jacob is essentially sent on the run to be protected from Esau's wrath. What looks like mere human events and sin will actually be used by God to get Jacob to a place of faith. God allowed these events to take place. God does not approve of their sinful actions, but He permitted these events to take place. This is God's providence. He worked through the sinful actions in this family and as we will clearly see later on, God gets Jacob right where He wants Jacob to be.

## Esau Marries an Ishmaelite

### Genesis 28:6-9

In another measure to show how angry he is over Jacob's scheme; Esau goes to his uncle Ishmael (Isaac's half-brother) and marries one of his daughters. Esau has two wives that are Hittites, and now one wife that is an Ishmaelite. This further shows Esau's disregard for the wishes of Abraham and Isaac and his outright anger and jealousy over Jacob and what has happened.

## Conclusion

God's faithfulness is on display yet again when we think about the promise transferred from Abraham to Isaac. God honors His oaths. He affirmed the promise to Isaac, just as He promised He would.

God's sovereign providence is also evident from these stories. God's providence has different definitions based on who you ask, but let's think of providence as God's supernatural ability to work through natural means. God is sovereign King over all. He will see to it that His will and plans are accomplished, no matter what. He ensures that the promise made to Abraham will be fulfilled.

God declared Jacob would be the one to get Isaac's blessing, not Esau. We see a glimpse of God permitting human events in order to carry out His plans later on.

God is truly an all-powerful God. He can work through natural means and human events to see to it His divine will is accomplished. He does the same in the life of the Christian still today.

I am sure many of us can admit if we look back over the years, we can see how God's hands were at work in our lives guiding us to a point where He wanted us to be. At the time we were probably not aware of God's direct involvement, yet when we look back it is very clear God was truly in the details.

God's providence is how He accomplishes His will through the lives of humans. Providence is how God watches over His children. God governs the world through His providence. He uses natural means to accomplish His supernatural purposes.