**Lesson 10**

**22-23 November 2021**

**Genesis 25:19 – 28:22**

**Jen Wilkin, *God of Covenant* video #5: *Sibling Rivalry (41.5 minutes)***

**Summary of What Has Been Covered So Far** – We have seen a father willingly lay down his long-awaited son to die. He received him back as from the dead, and then he secured for him a beautiful bride. We saw how that was a type or shadow of the future work of Christ. And lastly we saw that the servant getting the bride for Isaac was a picture of the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit and Christ’s bride the Church.

**Barrenness and “Double Trouble”** – The first section of scripture we are covering today gives another example of barrenness in the chosen family of God. Why? Because God wants us to know that His plans go forward in a miraculous way. But a major difference between Isaac and Abraham is that Isaac *prayed* for his wife and asked for children. Then when Rebekah conceived, she had trouble in that the two babies were already struggling together. She had no way of knowing that she was carrying twins, so she inquired of the Lord about her situation.

**God’s Design and Prophecy** – Part of the Lord’s response to Rebekah was that “the older shall serve the younger”, which goes against the cultural norms of that day. God was making the last first, as He so often does. When the babies were born, they were both given names that reflect something about themselves. Esau sounds like the Hebrew word for “hairy,” and Jacob literally means “he grasps the heel”, which was a Hebrew idiom for “he cheats,” i.e. he grasps for things that are not his.

**Seeds of Favoritism** – Genesis records that Isaac loved Esau because “he had a taste for wild game”. Esau was a man’s man, a great hunter, and that appealed to Isaac. Rebekah, the city girl, liked Jacob because he liked to stay at home in the tent. It is entirely probable that Rebekah had told Isaac what the Lord had said to her about the babies in her womb, so both parents knew that God had already chosen the younger child to bear His favor.

**Fruit of Favoritism** – When Jacob asked Esau to sell the birthright to him, he was cheating Esau out of something that would have come to him eventually anyway. Jacob demonstrated great *self*-reliance, not dependence on God. If Esau despised his birthright, certainly Jacob despised Esau, as indicated by the way he treated him.

**Like Father, Like Son** – When Isaac was faced with a famine in the land, he started to do what his father had done: go to Egypt, the land of plenty. However, God stopped him and told him to stay in the land of the Philistines instead. Isaac obeyed, but then he did something else his father had done before him: he lied about his wife and called her his sister, out of fear for his life. We need to carefully consider the fact that our spiritual children will follow our example, for good or for bad. What are we modeling to others around us?

**Unlike Father** – We read that Esau married two Canaanite women when he was 40 years old. This is the same age his father Isaac had been when he married Rebekah. The difference is that Abraham carefully arranged to find a suitable wife for his son Isaac…but Isaac had neglected to do so for Esau.

**Parental Favoritism and Its Fallout** – Isaac did have one thing in mind for Esau, however. He was determined to bless Esau and to make his favorite son his heir. What happens when favoritism is shown within a family? Do the children turn on the parents who are showing the favoritism? No—they turn on each other! When Rebekah hears about Isaac’s plan, she resorts to trickery to gain the blessing for *her* favorite son—even though she should have waited for God to bring about the fulfillment of His word to her in His time and in His way. When she proposes to Jacob a plan to trick his father, his only concern is that he might get caught.

**Taking God’s Name in Vain** – When Jacob took his father the food his mother had prepared, he lied over and over again, both by what he did and what he said. Perhaps the worst lie was his response to his father’s question about how he managed to kill game so quickly. He said, “Because the Lord your God granted me success!” Have you ever wondered what it means to “take the Lord’s name in vain”? The bottom line is this: **do not attribute to God what is the work of the sinner—and do not attribute to a sinner what is the work of God!**

**The Blessing** – A father’s blessing was not regarded as merely a kind sentiment. People considered these formal “blessings” as prophecies of things to come. In the case of the biblical patriarchs, that was true. Note how much Isaac’s words of blessing echo the promises God had made to both Abraham and Isaac himself. Now he is passing these same blessings on to *his* son.

**Esau’s Response to Jacob’s Deception** – First Esau says, “Isn’t he rightly named ‘Jacob”? For he has cheated me these two times!” Jeremiah 17:9 says, “Above all else the heart is *deceitful*.” The word Jeremiah used for deceitful was basically “Jacob-like”. Then Esau complains, “He took away my birthright.” Actually that wasn’t entirely true, because Esau sold his birthright. When Esau asks his father if there isn’t at least one blessing left for him, Isaac says no. Note that this means that **Isaac had planned to *give all that he had* to Esau, his favorite son, despite God’s decree.** But through the evil plan of Jacob, God still works out His righteous plan.

**Prophecies Fulfilled** – We know from history that the prophecies concerning Jacob came true. But the prophecy Isaac spoke over Esau also played out in history. Esau’s descendants occupied a very arid land. And many commentators believe that the prophecy “when you grow restless, you shall break his yoke from your neck” was fulfilled in the events described in Matthew 2:16-18, when Herod the Great kills the Hebrew babies in an attempt to kill the coming King of the Jews. (Herod was a descendant of the line of Esau.)

**Rebekah’s New Scheme** – When Rebekah advises Jacob to go to her brother Laban’s house “for a few days”, i.e. until Esau cools off, she says, “Why should I be bereft of you both in one day?” By that she means that if Esau kills Jacob, he will be put to death for murder, and she will lose both of her children. What she didn’t realize was that the “few days” would turn into 20 years—and she would never see her beloved son again.

**Jacob’s Path** – Jacob’s story is a difficult one. He seems to be following the path God laid out for him, but he does so on his own terms. God will still use him, and God’s plans will still come to pass, but it will be in spite of Jacob, not because of what he is like.

**Jacob’s Dream** – Jacob, the homebody, is sent from home. He leaves with the *promises* of God, but he lacks both the *experience* and the *relationship* with God that would enable him to enjoy them. So God appears to Jacob to begin a relationship with him. The ESV and KJV use the word “ladder” to describe what Jacob saw in his dream, but the Hebrew word is closer to the concept of a stairway. It is the picture of a ziggurat. What Jacob saw was basically what the tower of Babel was *trying* to be: a gateway leading to Heaven. When Jacob woke up, he exclaimed, “This is the house of God! This is the gate of Heaven!” Was he right or was he wrong? He was right in the sense that God had appeared to him there. But we, in our fuller understanding of the omnipresence of God, know that wherever we reach out to Christ to intercede for us, we stand as if we were at the very gate of Heaven. When Jesus told Nathanael that he would see the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man, He was saying that He himself is the stairway to Heaven. **He is the mediator between God and man, carrying the Word of God to us. And He is the mediator between man and God, carrying our requests to God the Father.** He is the go-between. He is the stairway to Heaven.

**Jacob’s Understanding versus Our Understanding of the Dream** – Jacob knew that he had been in the very presence of God, but he didn’t understand what we know about how his dream pictured the work of Christ on our behalf. Jacob took his stone “pillow” and used it to mark the spot where God had appeared to him, but we can know that wherever we lay our head, we have access to God.

**Jacob’s Vow** – Jacob’s vow reveals that he is a work in progress. He speaks in conditional terms with the God of the universe, i.e. “*IF* You do such and such, *then* I will do so and so.” Jacob’s life story is that of God continuing to woo him to Himself, following failure after failure, through deceit after deceit, when favoritism begins to play out in his own household.

**The Omnipresence of God** – How would it change your life if you knew that everywhere you are, God is? Jacob said, “Surely the Lord is in *this place*, and I didn’t know it!” But he will come to understand that the Lord is with him *wherever* he has gone. **We live our lives differently when we think of them as daily and moment by moment *witnessed* *by* God.** That thought is both a challenge and a comfort to us. It confronts us in the wrong thought that we can ever do something that is unknown to God. If you have ever thought, “No one will see,” you can know that that is not true, and it will stop you in your sin. But also, if you have ever endured a hardship and thought, “No one sees,” you can know that God is everywhere fully present, and He sees and, in time, He acts. How would it change your life if you lived under the knowledge that Christ waits to bear your words to God and God’s words to you?