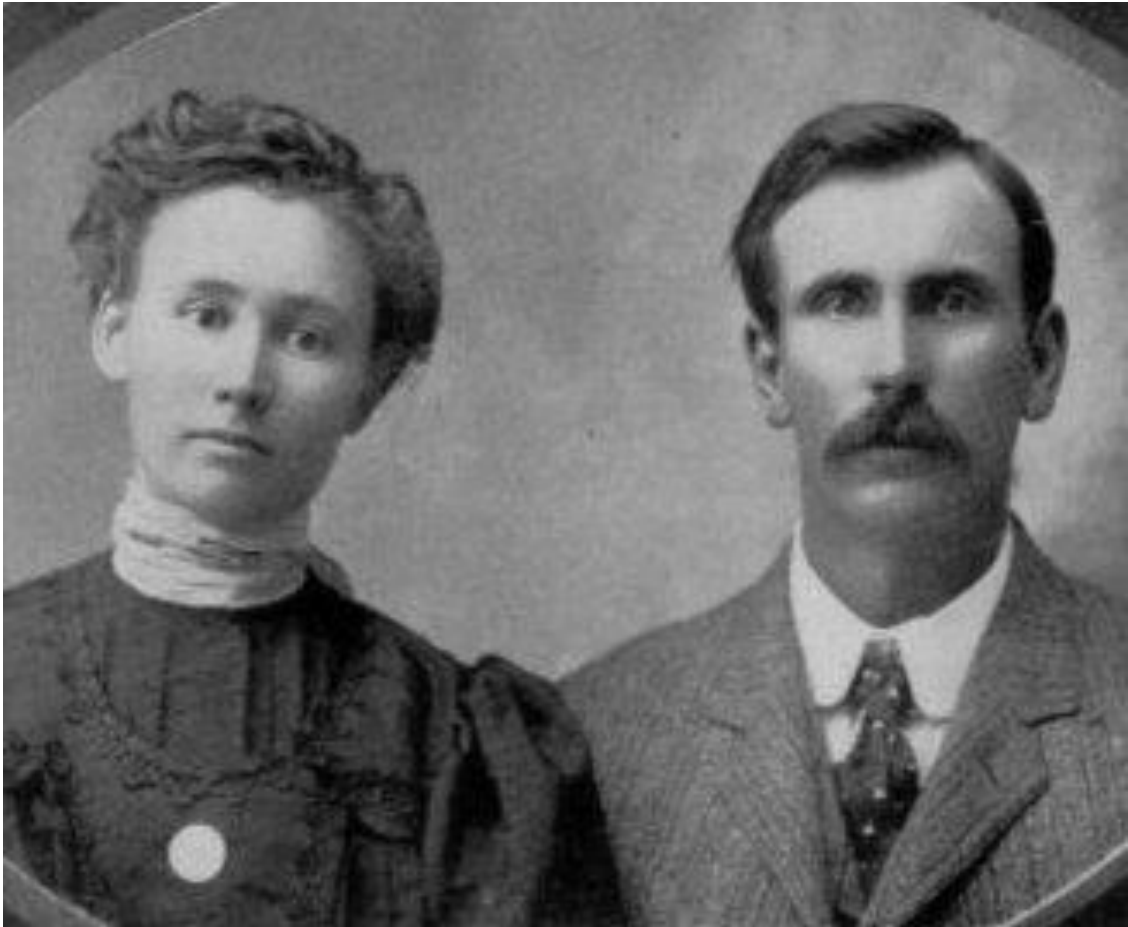


Meet the Parents



Genesis 23-28

Bible Studies for Ashfield Presbyterian Church
ashfieldpresbyterian.org.au

Genesis 23-25: A Spot for a Plot

The story of Abraham ends on a somber note... but there's still evidence of confidence in the promises of God, even in the fact of death. It's a great example of what faith is all about. Let's take a look.

Goodbye to Sarah (Ch 23)

Genesis 23 tells of the death of Abraham's wife Sarah.

- a) Where does Sarah die, and why are these details relevant?

- b) What is Abraham's view of his status in this place, and what's the Hittites' view?

- c) What does Ephron offer, and how does Abraham respond?

Why?

- d) Compare this with the account of the offer of the King of Sodom in Gen 14:21-24. Does this give a hint of what's going on?

The reality is, to bury his wife in a plot of ground in the Promised Land, Abraham has to buy it from its current owners. He's staking a claim in a land that is not yet his own but he sees it as vitally important to bury his beloved Sarah in a plot that's sure to become part of the land God promised. In fact, when Abraham himself dies, he still hasn't taken possession of the land.

Hello to Rebekah! (Ch 24)

e) The long and repetitive account of the selection of a wife for Isaac, the son of promise, makes a simple point repeatedly. What is it? (eg 24:40, 24:50)

- f) What connection do you see between the blessing on Rebekah in Gen 24:60 and the theme we've followed in these studies of Genesis 12-25?

Goodbye Abraham! (Ch 25:1-11)

Read the account of Abraham's final days.

- g) Anything significant about v5 as far as God's promises??

- h) What is the significance of Abraham's burial place?

- i) Read Hebrews 11:8-16. Observe the many things we can learn from Abraham's faith.

The fact is, Abraham didn't see God's promises fulfilled in his own lifetime. Like Sarah, he is buried in the plot Abraham purchased as an advance "stake" in the Promised Land.

Where should our final hope rest?

How should that affect the way we live in this present life?

What practical differences would it make to your life if this focus was more prominent?

What are you "longing for"?

Prayer Points

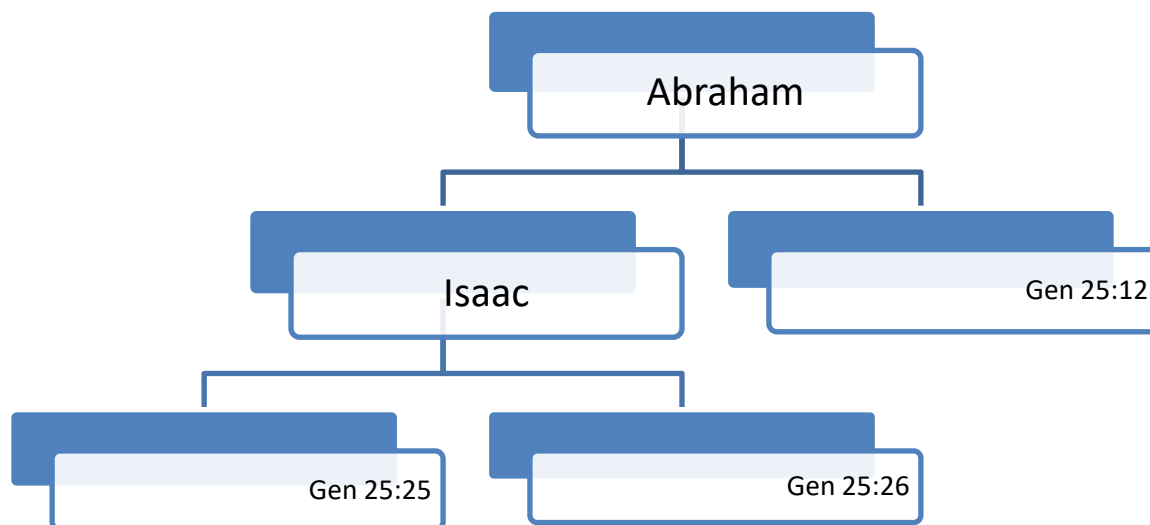
Genesis 25:19-28-9: A Tale of Two Stews

Getting in a Stew - Part I

We met Isaac in the earlier chapters of Genesis. He's the long promised son born to Abraham and Sarah in their old age. His half-brother Ishmael is described in the previous few verses – his descendants live to the south, near the border of Egypt, and “they lived in hostility towards all their brothers.” (We'll hear from the troublesome Ishmaelites from time to time as the story unfolds.) Now, the spotlight moves on to Isaac, and more especially to Isaac's sons, Jacob and Esau.

Read Genesis 25:19-34.

Fill in the blanks in the family tree



- What's unusual about Rebekah's pregnancy?
- Imagine this... How would you feel if the ultrasound results came back with a report like verse 23? What sort of “family dynamic” is it going to create?

What reversal of the usual order is on view here?

Check out the class names that Isaac and Rebekah give their twins. Literally, they're called “Hairy” and “Grasper.” Jacob, “the grasping one”, is born holding on to the heel of the first-born, Esau, “the hairy one.” Both of these qualities play a part in the next part of this twisted tale.

- What contrasts are highlighted between the twins in verses 27-28?

Grasping for greatness

God has already warned that the usual order of things would be reversed... and grasping Jacob is looking for every opportunity to make it happen.

- What does the “stew story” in v 30-34 tell us about...

- Jacob
- Esau

e) Neither of these guys stands out as being particularly impressive. Jacob is living up to his name as a “grasper.” But what bigger failing does Esau have, according to v32 and v34?

f) Hebrews 12v16-17 reflects on this event. What similar danger do Christians face?

What sort of temptation would it take to make you sell your birthright?

Analyse the stages of Esau’s decision. What part does the desire for immediate gratification play?

Sister Act 3 (Just like his dad...)

The spotlight switches back a generation, to Isaac and Rebekah again. As in his father Abraham’s time, there’s a famine. Like his dad, Isaac heads for the territory ruled by Abimelech. Like his dad, Isaac fears that his good looking wife will be stolen from him... and would rather “give her away” by pretending she’s his sister. This is the **THIRD TIME** this game has been played. **Read Genesis 26**, and look for:

- * evidence of God’s promises restated
- * evidence of Isaac’s fear, leading to sinful behaviour
- * evidence of God keeping his promise to bless

g) What irony can you see in the contrast between Isaac (v9) and the “gentile” Abimelech (v28)?

h) From hints in v24, what is Isaac’s biggest problem?

What connection do you see between fear, and lack of faith?

Getting in a Stew Part 2

There’s more to the “birthright” and “blessing” scenario than we might expect. Isaac has already successfully bartered for the rights of the firstborn son, but there’s more to be gained. The words of blessing of a dying dad were seen to have power to shape the future. And Jacob – aided by his doting mum – is always grasping for more. So what happens when Isaac thinks he’s on his deathbed, and calls for his number one son?

Read the nasty little tale of corrupt plotting in Genesis 27:1-40.

i) Where did Esau get the idea that blessing was something that could be traded for a good feed? Obviously from his dad! What deal does Isaac offer in v4?

j) What is Rebekah’s plan, and why? (cf 25:28)

k) See, hear, taste, touch, smell... the five senses all play their part in Jacob’s deception of his dad. How?

l) What blessing does Isaac give to Jacob? Is it the same, or different to, the blessing God gave Abraham and his descendants? (Is this it, or do we have to watch for another?)

m) When you read verse 36, whose side are you on?

It’s fascinating that as we read this account of the Israelites’ great ancestor Jacob, he’s presented in such an unsympathetic light. He’s a deceiver – a con-man of the worst kind. And

we can easily sympathise more for his brother Esau, who is left without blessing, with only the prospect of living by the sword until the day when he can stand it no more and casts off the yoke.

n) Read 27:41-28:9. In human terms, what is the impact of Jacob's deception...

- on Esau

- on Isaac

- on Rebekah

- on Jacob himself

The reality is - in spite of the neat excuse of going away to look for a suitable wife - Jacob is now man on the run. Rebekah says "Flee at once"... and that's exactly what he does. In fact, from this point on, he's always a man on the run. Until, as we'll see, God steps in and stops him in his tracks.

In fact, grasping for blessing, which is his habit, is a disastrous way to go. Maybe trying to organise your own blessing like this is always doomed. So far, he's destroyed his relationship with his brother and his dad, he's separated from his dotting mum; the family that was meant to be the "family of blessing" is a fractured family instead.

Trying to Get Your Own Blessing

o) Have you ever been tempted to take short cuts to happiness or prosperity or status or relational satisfaction like Jacob?

Has it ever gone badly wrong for you? What's the danger here?

Trying to Get Your Own Blessing...from God

p) What happens when you try to arrange your own blessing from GOD? Read Ephesians 2:8-13.

What does this say about how to be blessed by God?

Why do people find this hard to accept? Have you seen examples of people trying to be saved "by works"?

How is it - from Ephesians 2:11-13 - that we Gentiles are included in the family of blessing?

The great news is, even though we - by birth - didn't have a part in God's covenant promises to the descendants of Abraham, we've been included. And it's not by our own efforts. We don't need to impress God, we don't need to do deals - though we were "foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world," Paul says we have now been brought near to God, by the blood of Christ. That's grace!

Prayer Points