

# Jacob and Esau

Brynmawr Family Church Sermon (Family Service)  
Stuart Wheatman, Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> Feb 2011

## Intro

- Abraham promised a son by God, but his wife Sarah could not get pregnant and they were both old. So Sarah decided to have a baby by her maidservant acting having her baby for her with Abraham. He was called Ishmael, but was not the son God promised. The son would be born through Sarah. It happened when Sarah was 90 and Abraham 100. Isaac was born! Isaac means 'laughter' because both Abraham and Sarah laughed at the thought of them having a baby at such a great age- God is amazing!
- **2 volunteers- Isaac and Rebekah.**
- Isaac grew older and Abraham sent out a servant to find a suitable wife for his son. God led the servant to the right woman, a beautiful woman named Rebekah. They fell in love and got married. However, she was unable to have children. So they prayed to God, and God answered their prayer and she became pregnant. However, there was a problem. It seemed like there was World War 3 going on in her tummy. They asked God about the situation and He spoke to them saying that she was pregnant with twins, and things would not happen in the usual way of the older son being in charge, no, the younger son was going to have the upper hand.
- **2 volunteers- Esau and Jacob.**
- The twins were born. First out was Esau. 'E-saw'- the name means 'hairy'- he looked like a wookiee. Esau was also nicknamed 'Edom' which sounds like the Hebrew for 'red'. In fact the people descended from Esau were the Edomites and they settled south of the Dead Sea. They were often opposed to the Israelites and would not let them pass through their land on the way to the promised land. Eventually they were destroyed by King Nebuchadnezzar and ceased to be a nation. Esau was good at hunting, liked the outdoors and was his dad's favourite. His dad particularly liked it when he hunted deer and made a stew out of it.
- Next to be born was Jacob. Jacob came out holding onto Esau's heel. In fact he was 'pulling his leg' so to speak, because Jacob would be known as a deceiver, a trickster, someone who pulls someone else's leg. Jacob's name meant that- 'supplanter, deceiver'. Jacob had smooth skin, unlike his brother, and was a smooth operator. He enjoyed staying in the tent, and was his mother's favourite. He was also a great cook.

## Jacob loved the blessings of God

- Esau despised his birthright:
- One day Esau was out hunting and came back famished. He could smell that Jacob had been cooking a lovely red lentil stew and it smelt wonderful. He asked his brother for some, but he said 'no'. He kept asking and eventually Jacob made a deal with him, 'give me your birthright and you can have it'. Esau didn't care much for his birthright- he took it for granted, and anyway it wasn't any benefit to him there and then, but only meant that after dad died he would have the larger share of his dad's stuff and more responsibility. So, as he felt he would die if he didn't get the stew he sold his birthright to his brother Jacob.
- Jacob really cared about the things of God and the blessings of God, but Esau took things for granted and didn't appreciate how blessed he was. This led Esau to make poor choices as to who he married, and he ended up marrying 2 women from

another country (Hittites) who worshipped other gods. The Bible says this caused grief to his parents.

**And so Jacob got Esau's blessing:**

- There was a consequence to the poor decisions that Esau made, and it reminds us to make wise choices in our lives. When his dad's eyesight was failing he decided to pray the usual blessing over the oldest child, promising all he had to his oldest son. He asked Esau to go out and hunt a deer and prepare his favourite meal and he would get the blessing due to him. However, Rebekah knew this and got Jacob to prepare the meal instead and pretend to be Esau, having fur on his arm and mud smeared over him (dung?) to smell like the fields. This fooled dad and he gave the blessing to Jacob.
- Just then Esau came in, angry and in tears asking for his blessing, but it was too late- all the blessing had been given to his brother. There are consequences to our actions and these were the consequences of Esau despising his own birthright.
- The book of Hebrews (Heb 12:14-17) highlights why Esau despised his birthright and it's blessings: he wasn't holy but was 'profane' (KJV) which in the Greek literally means he 'stepped over the threshold' into ungodliness.
- What is the threshold you are tempted to step over? Being godless means being more attracted to the things of this world, and the pleasures of life than interested in the things of God. Being godless meant that Esau made poor decisions, and when he later regretted the decisions he had made it was too late to change things. Choose to make decisions now that you will not regret in years to come. There will be different temptations at different stages in life, and often pressure will come from others who are 'all doing it'. Let's make the right choices.
- Do we appreciate the blessings of God? Many people would give anything to have what we have.  
In 1536 William Tyndale was strangled and burnt at the stake in Brussel's for translating the Bible into English from the original Hebrew and Greek and using the printing press for the first time to distribute many copies to the common people (before this it was illegal to translate the scriptures or even speak them out in English, it all had to be in Latin, and anyone doing it was accused of being a heretic and burned).
- Always appreciate the good things God gives you. Don't take for granted. Be thankful for His goodness. Eph 1:3 the Father has blessed us with 'every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ'.

**Jacob learned to trust God for the future**

- Rebekah knew that when Isaac died Esau would try and kill him, so she had a word with Isaac saying that because Esau had made poor choices about the wives he married, Jacob should marry someone who was a relative and worshipped the true God, so Isaac agreed and Jacob was sent to Haran, in Padan Aram (Aramaic for the field of Aram), in Mesopotamia outside of the land of Israel to look for a wife. This must have appeared to be a step backwards because it was this place that Abraham was sent out from by God to inherit the land of Israel.
- How must Jacob have felt? Going away from the land of promise to an unknown land, leaving family behind? He settled down to sleep one night on the way there in a place called Luz. That night he had a dream of a ladder to Heaven with the angels of God ascending and descending and God at the top. God spoke and reassured Jacob that He was with him and would bless him, and to trust him wherever he went, and God would bring him safely back to this land, which was a gift to him and his descendants. Also he would have many, many descendants and his 'seed' (singular=Christ) would bless all peoples. Sometimes we need a God-encounter to reassure us that we are on the right track. Sometimes God will call us to do things which we know are not our ultimate destiny, but they are an important preliminary.
- Are you worried about the future? Leaving home, getting a job, finding a

husband/wife, getting married? Choose to surrender your worries to God, as He really is the One in charge of your future, and just like Jacob He will guide you.

### **Jacob knew his priority was to first get right with God**

- Jacob went to Padan Aram and met Laban, his mother's brother. He fell in love with Laban's daughter Rachel and agreed to work for Laban for 7 years in exchange for her being given in marriage (this is called the marriage dowry- you paid it to your wife's father). However, Jacob reaped what he sowed, as when he got married Laban had tricked him into marrying her older sister Leah, who wasn't as good looking. When Jacob complained Laban said that it was the custom for the older daughter to be given first, but if he was willing to work for another 7 years at the end of the week (i.e. the marriage celebrations) he would also give Rachel in marriage to him. Jacob agreed to this (it must be love, love, love) and also worked another 6 years on top. Laban tried to get the upper hand on Jacob, but God was with him and he left Laban having gained much livestock and also having 12 sons!
- When Jacob went back to Caanan (Israel) he wanted to restore things with his brother. He sent word on ahead, but word came back that his brother was coming to meet him with 400 men! Panic!
- Jacob divided his family into 2 groups and sent gifts on ahead of him to appease his brother- he did all that he could do, but he was seriously scared for his life. So he spent time alone that night with God.
- That night he wanted to know from God if it was all going to be okay, after all God had told him to come back. God appeared in the form of a man and Jacob wrestled with Him until daybreak. He had a wrestling match with God in human form! Many (me included) believe this to be a pre-incarnation of Jesus- a 'Theophany' or 'Christophany'. Jacob was putting up a great fight and so God decides to touch his hip and dislocate it. God says to him 'let me go for the day breaks' and Jacob says 'I won't let You go unless You bless me!' God says 'What is your name?' and then changes his name from 'Jacob' ('deceiver', 'supplanter') to 'Israel' ('he struggles, grapples (wrestles) with God')- i.e. God's champion, God's WWF, God-wrestler. As Jacob limped away from the encounter the life struggle was over.
- For us the life struggle is over when we allow Christ to dislocate our hips by giving up our pride and all our own self-ability and finally surrender our lives to His mercy and trust, not in our own failing abilities and peace delegations, but in Him alone. As we accept His perfect sacrifice on the cross for our sins we limp away with a new name and guaranteed victory and blessing over us. In Christ the struggle to 'be someone' is officially over, and we realise it is all about Him. It took Jacob all this time to realise his complete need of God, and that it was about God's glory rather than his own. He left the encounter without fear of his brother, but with love for him.
- The result was restoration with his brother!
- Esau was attracted to the things of this world and sold out on the promises of God. Jacob wanted to taste the promises of God- he wanted to grapple with the things of God and like the apostles could boast- he actually touched the saviour. Are we prepared to grapple with God over the life situations we are facing? Are the promises of God in our perception far away and out of our reach making us apathetic, or are they there for the taking and do we have the faith to grab them? Do we believe that God is out to bless us?

### **Summary**

- **Jacob loved the blessings of God**
- **Jacob learned to trust God for the future**
- **Jacob knew his priority was to first get right with God**

Song: I have heard that You are swift to bless the seeker