



Church of God Sunday School

JACOB AND ESAU—THE BIRTHRIGHT AND THE BLESSING

Genesis 25:20 — 28:7



Abraham's son Isaac was married to Rebekah when he was 40. For twenty years they had no children. Isaac earnestly prayed for a child, just as his father had prayed for him many years before. God answered Isaac's prayer with not one baby, but two baby boys.

Before the twins were born, Rebekah wondered if something was wrong. The babies were very active, struggling "together within her." She asked the Lord about this, and He told her, "Two nations are in thy womb, . . . the one people shall be stronger than the other people." The Lord also said that the older son would serve the younger son.

When the twins were born, they were very different. The firstborn had rough, hairy skin. They named him *Esau*, which means "the hairy one." The younger baby had smooth skin. After he was born, he took hold of Esau's heel. They named him *Jacob*, which means "holder of the heel" or "supplanter."

The years went by. Jacob and Esau grew up. Esau became a skillful hunter, "a man of the field." He was favored by his father Isaac. Jacob enjoyed being close to home, "dwelling in tents." He was favored by his mother Rebekah.

One day, Jacob was boiling "pottage" (a soup made from lentil seeds that tastes similar to bean soup). Esau came in from the fields, tired and very hungry from hunting. He asked Jacob to give him some pottage. Jacob said, "Sell me this day thy birthright."

Esau said, "Behold, I am at the point to die: and what profit shall this birthright do to me?" (The birthright belonged to the oldest son: it gave him special privileges and rights.) Jacob told Esau to "swear" (solemnly promise) that he would sell his birthright to him. So Esau sold his valuable birthright for some soup! After that, Esau acted as if the birthright was not really important, but it was very important!

Many years passed. Isaac was very old, and he could not see well. He wanted to make sure that he blessed Esau before he died. So he called for Esau and asked him to go into the fields and hunt for "some venison" (deer meat). Isaac told Esau to prepare the meat and bring it to him; then he would eat it and bless him.

Rebekah heard what Isaac said to Esau. After Esau left for the fields, she told Jacob to go to the flock and bring back two young goats. She would prepare meat for Isaac, "such as he loveth." Jacob could give it to his father before Esau came back; then Jacob would receive the blessing instead of Esau.

Jacob said to his mother, "Esau my brother is a hairy man, and I am a smooth man: My father peradventure [possibly] will feel me, and I shall seem to him as a deceiver; and I shall bring a curse upon me, and not a blessing." Rebekah insisted that he go. She took some of Esau's clothing and put it on Jacob. She put the goat skins on his hands and on his neck. Then she gave him the meat and some bread. Jacob was ready to deceive Isaac.

Jacob went to Isaac and said, "My father." Isaac answered, "Here am I; who art thou, my son?" Jacob lied and said, "I am Esau thy first-born." Jacob said he had done what he was asked to do. When Isaac asked Jacob how he had done it so quickly, Jacob said the Lord had brought it to him. (No doubt, he used God's name to make his deception more believable.)



Isaac said, "Come near . . . that I may feel thee, my son, whether thou be my very son Esau or not." Isaac felt the goat skins and said, "The voice is Jacob's voice, but the hands are the hands of Esau." Even though the voice was Jacob's voice, the hairy hands fooled Isaac, so he blessed Jacob.

Isaac asked again, "Art thou my

very son Esau?" Jacob lied again and said, "I am." As Isaac began to eat the food, he said, "Come near now, and kiss me, my son." When Jacob kissed Isaac, Isaac smelled the clothing of Esau and believed that he really was Esau.

Isaac continued to bless Jacob: ". . . God give thee of the dew of heaven, and the fatness of the earth, and plenty of corn and wine: Let people serve thee, and nations bow down to thee: be lord over thy brethren, and let thy mother's sons bow down to thee: cursed be every one that curseth thee, and blessed be he that blesseth thee." Jacob received his father's blessing and left.

Very soon after that, Esau came in with meat prepared for his father. When Isaac heard his voice, he said, "Who art thou?" Esau said, "I am thy son, thy firstborn Esau." Isaac trembled greatly and asked who had just been with him, giving him food, and receiving the blessing.

When Esau heard that, he cried with a great and bitter cry: "Bless me, even me also, O my father." Isaac told him that Jacob had come—very slyly—and

taken away the blessing that should have been Esau's. Then Isaac gave Esau another blessing—but it was not the one intended for the oldest son.

Esau said Jacob had been rightly named (Jacob means *supplanter*—to take the place of another through trickery). Twice Jacob had taken Esau's place in unfair ways: once to get his birthright and once to get his blessing. Esau hated Jacob so much that he wanted to kill him.

Rebekah told Jacob to go away until Esau was no longer angry at him. Isaac sent Jacob to Rebekah's family. There he should take a wife, and God would bless him and his children. He would inherit the land and the blessings that God had given to Abraham and to Isaac. And "Jacob obeyed his father and his mother."

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**MEMORY VERSE:**  
*"Esau . . . for one morsel of meat sold his birth-right."  
—Hebrews 12:16*  
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