

EXPOSITION OF GENESIS

Message #60

Genesis 25:12-26

G. Campbell Morgan used to say, "I believe the promises of God enough to venture an eternity on them." At the time Moses wrote Genesis, Israel was still not in that land and had not seen the promised seed and was not a great nation. Could Israel expect that God would still fulfill His promises to Abraham even after he was dead?

GOD WILL SOVEREIGNLY CONTINUE TO FULFILL HIS PROMISES AND HIS PROGRAM IN HIS WAY ACCORDING TO HIS CHOOSING.

NARRATIVE REALITY #1 - What God did with Ishmael. Genesis 25:12-18

Tucked away in some of the previous texts are some very unique promises concerning Ishmael: There was the promise made to Abraham because of his prayer to God (Genesis 17:18-20), in which God reiterated again to Abraham in Genesis 21:13. This is really the key to this entire section. There was also a promise made to Hagar (Genesis 21:18), in which God promised to make a great nation out of Ishmael. **So the information of these twelve sons born to Ishmael is a fulfillment of promises made by God several years before.** Dr. C. I. Scofield said God predicted Abraham would be the father of many nations, not only Israel (Genesis 17:6,16).

As we have already studied, Ishmael is recognized as the father of the Arabs, and this list gives a historical lineage as to the various Arab tribes and background for some of the Arab Bedouins in existence to this very day.

For example, we know that Nebaioth produced a people of northern Arabia, who became known for their abundant flocks (Isaiah 60:7). We know that Kedar produced an Arab people who were known as good fighters (Isaiah 21:17). Tema produced an Arab people who were known traders (Isaiah 21:13-14), who were highly organized (Job 6:19). **The fact that we can trace so many of these for several hundred years is again proof that God does literally keep His word.**

These were the twelve sons of Ishmael. They had a name, they had cities, they had fortified camps, they produced nations. According to verse 18, they had their own land, the land east of Israel spread over the various parts of what is known to be Northern Arabia.

It is interesting to point out that Mohammed, the so called Islamic prophet, is supposed to have descended from Ishmael through Kedar (S. R. Driver, *Genesis*, p. 233). However, **what we see in verse 17 is that Ishmael, himself, had some handle on true theology and not the false heresies of the Islamic religion.**

Verse 17 informs us that Ishmael died at age 137. He had lived a long life, a productive life and a relatively peaceful life. Notice carefully that the text said he "died and was gathered to his people." This is the same clause that was used for Abraham (Genesis 25:8). It means that even though he had been somewhat of a loner, he was a believer. As Dr. S. L. Johnson said, "Ishmael, something of a loner was gathered to his people, a phrase that has suggested to many that he, too, was among the believing, although excluded from the material aspects of the Abrahamic covenant" (S. L. Johnson, *Genesis*, Study #40, p. 3).

NARRATIVE REALITY #2 - What God did for Isaac. Genesis 25: 19-26

To sum up what God did for Isaac in this section - He gave him two sons and informed him which one would be the “seed of promise” lineage. Notice again the emphasis on Abraham in verse 19 even though he is dead . These blessings occur because of God’s promises to Abraham.

Fact #1 - The age of Isaac. Genesis 25:20

There are two times Isaac’s age is given in this context, here concerning his marriage and in verse 26 concerning the birth of his sons. Obviously Isaac was 40 when he married; Rebekah and he was 60 when his sons were born. This establishes that the time from marriage to the birth of his sons was 20 years. Two lessons we learn: 1) God’s fulfillment of promises was not immediate, but about 20 years. 2) God’s fulfillment of promises came after years of faithfulness. **God will always keep His word but sometimes it will be after years of faithfulness.**

Fact #2 - The prayer of Isaac. Genesis 25:21

Isaac was a man of prayer and when years passed and Rebekah did not conceive to produce this special lineage, he knew what to do about the problem - pray about it. The word “pray” indicates that this prayer was offered to God in a very sacred manner, as a sweet fragrance to God.

Here is one time, when we must conclude that God’s fulfillment of His program was chronologically determined, in part, by the prayer of His people. **There is one thing a believer can always do in times of barrenness - he can pray.**

Fact #3 - The problem of Rebekah. Genesis 25:22

After conception, Rebekah sensed serious trouble. In fact, the word “struggle” indicates there is a violent attempt for each of these unborn babies to break in pieces each other (Gesenius, *Hebrew Lexicon*, p. 779). This was more than just twins kicking each other, literally there was a theological war taking place inside Rebekah. The nation Israel was about to be born and before it was born, there was a vicious attempt to destroy that nation while inside the mother. Edom, the nation of Esau, has always sought to destroy Israel (Ezekiel 35:5).

Rebekah knew what to do about her problem, for she had learned this from the servant that brought her to Isaac, she learned this from her father-in-law Abraham, and from her husband Isaac - she prayed.

Fact #4 - The answer of God. Genesis 25:23

God informed Rebekah that the reason for her physical turmoil was because two nations were at war inside her. The Israelites and Edomites would be ferocious enemies because one nation was of God and the other wasn’t.

As foreign as this was to the culture, God made His choice and it would be the younger and not the elder who would be His choice, the seed of promise. There are three ways this has been used in the Bible:

1) As an illustration that even though God has a right to punish His people for their rebellion,

those who have been chosen by God have great status with God - Hosea 12:2-3.

2) As an illustration of God's selective love for Israel, including His special blessings to her - Malachi 1:2.

3) As an illustration of God's sovereign, elective choice in salvation - Romans 9:11-13. God chose Jacob before Jacob and Esau could choose anything. In our salvation, He chooses us before we ever could choose Him (Romans 9:24).

Fact #5 - The birth of Esau and Jacob. Genesis 25:24-26

When it came time for Rebekah to give birth to her twins, the first to be born was Esau (v. 25). There are three unique things about him:

- 1) He is said to be "red" - the particular color is reddish brown.
- 2) He is said to be "hairy" - literally in Hebrew "all of him was like a coat of hair."
- 3) He is named "Esau" - the name means to be covered with hair, to be rough.

The second born was Jacob (v. 26). The peculiar feature is that he was holding Esau's heel, which meant theologically that he would be the one who would receive the first position. The name Jacob means supplanter. Jacob would supplant Esau and take his place and position.

It is possible to have two children born into the same family as a direct result of prayer. Those children may have two godly parents and one grows up to love God and be blessed by God and the other doesn't. You cannot blame the parents for any of this for these were two parents who loved God. In all reality, one was chosen by God and the other wasn't.

Although we will never be able to comprehend the mysteries of God electing one and not electing another, all may be certain of this - "Whosoever will call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."