

# GENESIS 25

## Introduction

Abraham and Ishmael come to the end of their lives; Jacob and Esau embark upon their lives. Two men look back upon their lives; two men look forward towards their lives.

Genesis Twenty-five is a vista, a vantage point, from which to survey the landscape of living life on this earth. As Abraham and Ishmael *end* their lives looking back, and as Jacob and Esau *embark* upon their lives looking forward, you are encouraged to look around at *your* own life. Are you more like Abraham? or Ishmael? Are you more like Jacob? or Esau?

It will help you in your look around your life if you identify what made these men who the Bible is contrasting different from one another.

There are many physical differences you could identify. For example, there were differences in their physical pursuits. Both Ishmael and Esau were hunters; Abraham and Jacob lived a more pastoral life, dwelling in tents. But it wasn't so much their physical pursuits that separated them as it was their spiritual pursuits:

Abraham was pursuing eternity; Ishmael was pursuing the earthly. In the New Testament you are told that Abraham "By faith...dwelt in the land of promise as *in* a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker *is* God (Hebrews 11:9-10). Not so Ishmael; in Genesis 25:16 you learn that he established a name and a nation for himself on earth.

Jacob was pursuing eternity; Esau was pursuing the earthly. Though his methods were wrong, Jacob desired the spiritual birthright that Esau despised.

Abraham and Jacob set their affections on eternity and it ruled their earthly pilgrimage. Ishmael and Esau served their appetites and it ruined their eternal perspective. Whether you are like Abraham and

Jacob, or like Ishmael and Esau, is determined by whether you set your affections on the eternal or whether you serve your earthly appetites. #1 If You Set Your Affections On Eternity You Will Be Fully Satisfied In The Grace Of God, and #2 If You Serve Your Appetites On Earth You Will Fall Short Of The Grace Of God

#1 If You Set Your Affections On Eternity  
You Will Be Fully Satisfied In The Grace Of God

If you look on the surface and circumstances of their lives, Ishmael seems to have more to satisfy him in life than the man of God:

Ishmael had more sons than Abraham - even though God had promised Abraham that his descendants would be innumerable.

Ishmael had more land than Abraham - even though God had promised Abraham that he would inherit all the land of Canaan.

Ishmael had more nations than Abraham - even though God had promised Abraham that he would be the father of many nations.

The surface and circumstances of life often seem to favor the worldly person rather than the one walking with God. The worldly person would seem to have more of the things which bring satisfaction than the one who walks with God.

I am thankful for God's inspired commentary to set me straight about what brings true and lasting satisfaction! As Abraham and Ishmael end their lives, here is how God the Holy Spirit describes them:

Abraham is described in verse eight, "Then Abraham breathed his last and died in a good old age, an old man and full *of years*, and was gathered to his people." The words "of years" are in italics, meaning they are not in the Hebrew text. Abraham is described as being *full* - being fully satisfied in this life and in the life to come.

Ishmael is described in verse eighteen: "...He died in the presence of all his brethren." The word translated "died" is "fell"; "he *fell* in the presence of all his brethren." It is an apt way to describe someone who is seeking the satisfaction the world brings. You always fall short

if this world and its wealth are your desires. You either never have enough...or, when you do acquire all you could desire, you realize it cannot truly satisfy. As Jesus once said, (Matthew 16:26) "For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?"

The man walking with God was full; the man walking after the world fell. On the surface the circumstances may seem otherwise, but in the end the truth is revealed.

Genesis 25:1 Abraham again took a wife, and her name was Keturah.

Genesis 25:2 And she bore him Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak, and Shuah.

Genesis 25:3 Jokshan begot Sheba and Dedan. And the sons of Dedan were Asshurim, Letushim, and Leummim.

Genesis 25:4 And the sons of Midian were Ephah, Epher, Hanoch, Abidah, and Eldaah. All these were the children of Keturah.

In 1 Chronicles you are told that Keturah was Abraham's concubine. In Old Testament times, a concubine was a female slave or mistress with whom a man was lawfully permitted to have sexual intercourse. They were less than wives, but protected by both civil and sacred law.

Keturah, then, was in a difficult position. She was less than a wife, actually a slave, providing sexual pleasure and procreation for Abraham, knowing full well that Abraham had only one real love - Sarah. I don't want to press the application too far, but many married women express similar sentiments! They feel as if they are less than a wife, actually a slave, providing sexual pleasure and procreation, married to men who put other loves before them! I would encourage husbands to elevate their wives, serve them, and surrender any competing hobby, habit, or relationship. As for wives in difficult marriages, take a lesson from Keturah. Her name means "incense," or "the one who burns incense." Even in a difficult marriage she produced a lovely fragrance unto the Lord!

Genesis 25:5 And Abraham gave all that he had to Isaac.

Genesis 25:6 But Abraham gave gifts to the sons of the concubines which Abraham had; and while he was still living he sent them eastward, away from Isaac his son, to the country of the east.

God had told Abraham that it was through Isaac that the promises would be fulfilled. Abraham's dealings with his children were

consistent with the Word of God - even if it were difficult for him to carry them out.

Genesis 25:7 This *is* the sum of the years of Abraham's life which he lived: one hundred and seventy-five years.

Genesis 25:8 Then Abraham breathed his last and died in a good old age, an old man and full of years, and was gathered to his people.

In the King James, verse seven reads, "And these *are* the days of the years of Abraham's life which he lived, an hundred threescore and fifteen years." Abraham's years consisted of days; he lived one day at a time - thanking God for his daily provision and protection.

Genesis 25:9 And his sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah, which *is* before Mamre, in the field of Ephron the son of Zohar the Hittite,

Genesis 25:10 the field which Abraham purchased from the sons of Heth. There Abraham was buried, and Sarah his wife.

The two sons cooperate in the burial. Weddings and funerals generally bring families together - at least temporarily. They are times to proclaim the Gospel. There will be family members who are offended when you do...The cross of Jesus Christ *is* an offense to those who are rejecting it. Think of how offended Ishmael might have been: Abraham had sent he and his mother away...His brother, Isaac, although younger, had received all of the inheritance...Abraham was buried next to Sarah - with no thought of Ishmael's mother, Hagar. All this, though, was a preaching of the Gospel to Ishmael and others! These actions of Abraham were based on the promises of God.

Genesis 25:11 And it came to pass, after the death of Abraham, that God blessed his son Isaac. And Isaac dwelt at Beer Lahai Roi.

Genesis 25:12 Now this *is* the genealogy of Ishmael, Abraham's son, whom Hagar the Egyptian, Sarah's maidservant, bore to Abraham.

Genesis 25:13 And these *were* the names of the sons of Ishmael, by their names, according to their generations: The firstborn of Ishmael, Nebajoth; then Kedar, Adbeel, Mibsam,

Genesis 25:14 Mishma, Dumah, Massa,

Genesis 25:15 Hadar, Tema, Jetur, Naphish, and Kedemah.

Genesis 25:16 These *were* the sons of Ishmael and these *were* their names, by their towns and their settlements, twelve princes according to their nations.

Genesis 25:17 These *were* the years of the life of Ishmael: one hundred and thirty-seven years; and he breathed his last and died, and was gathered to his people.

Genesis 25:18 (They dwelt from Havilah as far as Shur, which *is* east of Egypt as you go toward Assyria.) He died in the presence of all his brethren.

In verse eleven you read that "God blessed Isaac." I call your attention to a comparison of the circumstances between he and his brother Ishmael:

Ishmael had twelve sons and many, many grandsons; all the while Isaac's wife was barren.

Ishmael established cities; Isaac dwelt in a single location.

Ishmael became many nations; Isaac didn't see the fulfillment of God's promise to make of him many nations.

The blessings were spiritual, not physical; they were eternal, not earthly. Ishmael seemed "full," but in the end he simply "fell."

God is telling you that *eternity* is what fully satisfies - both when you arrive there and in the approach, as you learn to depend upon the grace of God to live each day, one day at a time. Solomon, who achieved all that the world could offer, was in the end unsatisfied apart from eternity. Life without God's fullness of grace is, to quote him, "vanity," "a chasing after the wind." In Ecclesiastes 3:11 Solomon said the Lord has put eternity in your heart; nothing short of His grace preparing you for eternity will ever truly satisfy.

In Colossians 3:1-2, the Apostle Paul says, "...seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth."

The earthly can never fill the eternity in your heart!

#2 If You Serve Your Appetites On Earth  
You Will Fall Short Of The Grace Of God

"Fall[ing] short of the grace of God" is not my phrase. It is God the Holy Spirit's commentary on the life of Esau and all those who serve their earthly appetites instead of setting their affections on the eternal. In Hebrews 12:15-17 you read,

"[look] carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many

become defiled; lest there *be* any fornicator or profane person like Esau, who for one morsel of food sold his birthright. For you know that afterward, when he wanted to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought it diligently with tears."

Your theology will determine what you believe is meant by falling short of grace. Godly men continue to disagree over what exactly this very sobering passage means. While men will continue to argue over what is meant in this passage, they should agree on what this passage is meant to convey: It is an exhortation to stop serving your fleshly appetites with the world's stew, and to set your affections on eternity.

Genesis 25:19 This *is* the genealogy of Isaac, Abraham's son. Abraham begot Isaac.

Genesis 25:20 Isaac was forty years old when he took Rebekah as wife, the daughter of Bethuel the Syrian of Padan Aram, the sister of Laban the Syrian.

Isaac waited well into manhood for God to provide the right partner. He was able to subdue the sex appetite by setting his affections on eternity!

Genesis 25:21 Now Isaac pleaded with the LORD for his wife, because she *was* barren; and the LORD granted his plea, and Rebekah his wife conceived.

Isaac looked to heaven to solve his struggles on earth...

Genesis 25:22 But the children struggled together within her; and she said, "If *all is* well, why *am I like* this?" So she went to inquire of the LORD.

Her barrenness was discouraging; then her fruitfulness was discouraging! We always think that when God answers our discouragement we will find it glorious. It isn't always that way.

Underline the question Rebekah asks, "If all is well, why am I like this?" In God's eternal purposes, all can be "well" while you are struggling. For one thing, it drives you to seek Him for answers!

Genesis 25:23 And the LORD said to her: "Two nations *are* in your womb, Two peoples shall be separated from your body; *One* people shall be stronger than the other, And the older shall serve the younger."

Genesis 25:24 So when her days were fulfilled *for her* to give birth, indeed *there were* twins in her womb.

Genesis 25:25 And the first came out red. *He was* like a hairy garment all over; so they called his name Esau.

Genesis 25:26 Afterward his brother came out, and his hand took hold of Esau's heel; so his name was called Jacob. *Isaac was* sixty years old when she bore them.

God grants Rebekah a marvelous prophecy. It is in response to her struggle and it follows her seeking the Lord.

Bible teachers see a picture as well as a prophecy. Rebekah had two very different children struggling within her for supremacy. In the New Testament you learn that, as a Christian, you have two very different natures struggling within *you* for supremacy! The old, sin nature is like Esau - it is older and like a wild beast. The new nature, received by grace through faith in Jesus Christ, will have the ultimate supremacy - as Jacob did with Esau.

Genesis 25:27 So the boys grew. And Esau was a skillful hunter, a man of the field; but Jacob was a mild man, dwelling in tents.

We need to stop and comment on this description of Jacob as "a mild man..." He was no sissy, no mamma's boy. The word is from a root word that means "complete." The man who sets his affections on eternity can be complete. He can, as Paul says in Ephesians 5:15, "walk circumspectly" - he can walk in all directions at the same time in the power of God the Holy Spirit. Esau, the man serving his appetites, can only excel in one or two areas - and even then his excellence is measured by physical standards that have little to do with eternal realities.

Genesis 25:28 And Isaac loved Esau because he ate *of his* game, but Rebekah loved Jacob.

The easiest way to promote strife in your home is to disagree on how to deal with or discipline your children...

Now we come to the episode that establishes the essential distinction between the affections and the appetites:

Genesis 25:29 Now Jacob cooked a stew; and Esau came in from the field, and he *was* weary.

Genesis 25:30 And Esau said to Jacob, "Please feed me with that same red *stew*, for I *am* weary." Therefore his name was called Edom.

Genesis 25:31 But Jacob said, "Sell me your birthright as of this day."

Genesis 25:32 And Esau said, "Look, I *am* about to die; so what *is* this birthright to me?"

Genesis 25:33 Then Jacob said, "Swear to me as of this day." So he swore to him, and sold his birthright to Jacob.

Genesis 25:34 And Jacob gave Esau bread and stew of lentils; then he ate and drank, arose, and went his way. Thus Esau despised *his* birthright.

Jacob desired the spiritual birthright; Esau despised it. Jacob set his affections on eternity; Esau served his earthly appetites.

Jacob's methods were certainly wrong; we would not condone them. Still you cannot help but admire his zeal for spiritual things. He is not unlike many Christians who seek spiritual things while using carnal methods. Their activities cannot be condoned, but they need correction rather than condemnation.

As for Esau, he lived for the moment. Notice the commentary, "...he ate, drank, arose, and went his way." This is the philosophy of all those who indulge their appetites - whether with food, drink, drugs, sex, power, wealth, violence, or anything else that caters to the flesh. "Eat, drink, and be merry" is a phrase that has common acceptance in our culture today. When I was younger it's more contemporary expression was, "If it feels good, do it."

This episode in Esau's life seems to be an exaggeration, something blown completely out of proportion. It seems unreal that he would be willing to sell his birthright for a bowl of lentil soup!

It is powerfully exhortive precisely because of its seeming exaggeration. You see, we often indulge our appetites thinking that "one little drink," or "one quick sexual encounter" will not really have much of a lasting affect. From God's vantage point, however, we are acting no differently than Esau - we are preferring a moments earthly pleasure to all of eternity's treasure!

Is it really that serious? Yes, it is. Those whose lives are now shipwrecked began by indulging their appetites "just a little," supposing they were strong enough to know when to quit. They weren't strong enough; they didn't know when to quit. They have fallen short of the grace of God.

Beloved, don't become one of them. Set your affections on eternity.

Conclusion

You and I have strong appetites...But, if you're saved by the blood of Jesus Christ, you have sincere affections for the Lord. Setting your affections on things above will help you to subdue your appetites for the things below. In the end, you will be satisfied, O, so satisfied, as you arrive home.