

THE HUNGER NAME

GENESIS 36 JANUARY 29, 2014

Mosey on over to Genesis chapter 36 this evening.

If you are working through our read-the-Bible-in-one-year plan you've finished with Genesis where we saw some of the greatest stories of the Bible. Adam and Eve, the flood, the life of Abraham, Joseph's saga. But as you go through those chapters you get to Genesis 36 and it feels a little out of place. You're tracking with Jacob and the crazy life he had and then all of a sudden you read:

Genesis 36.1 - Now this is the genealogy of Esau, who is Edom.

Now, Esau is a major character in this section of Genesis, but in all honestly I got to this chapter and I found myself thinking, "Who cares? What do I care about Esau's kids and the hills they lived in?" This seems like a big section of real estate to give a guy whose story is effectively over, when you think about the greater narrative that God is telling in the Bible. He as a character effectively exits the stage, yet we have all this detail given to us in this genealogy.

It is part of a pattern we see several times in Genesis, where the Lord shows us a contrast between 2 characters who find themselves in the same time and the same place, seeing the same work of God, yet choosing 2 very different paths, leading to very different outcomes. One will choose to follow the Lord and honor Him and their story continues. The other character chooses not to pursue the Lord and they quickly fade away, bringing ruin into their lives and families.

We see this pattern first with Cain and Abel. Then we see it with Abraham and Lot. And here we see it again with Jacob and Esau.

And so, as Esau's story closes out, the Bible is purposefully trying to show us something about him.

Now, on first glance, you read Genesis 36 and there are many marks of success, humanly speaking. Esau is a wealthy man with a big family. He conquers a mountain and has tons of possessions. Chiefs and Kings descend from his sons. But his legacy is one of animosity toward God and antagonism against the Israelites. His descendants always pop up in opposition against God's people and God's plan.

So where did he go wrong? How could the son of Isaac take such a turn?

The answer is given to us throughout the book of Genesis, but it's underlined for us in Genesis 36. Listen to these verses from the chapter.

Genesis 36.1 - Now this *is* the genealogy of Esau, *who is Edom*.

Genesis 36.8 - So Esau dwelt in Mount Seir. *Esau is Edom*.

Genesis 36.9 - And this *is* the genealogy of Esau *the father of the Edomites* in Mount Seir.

Genesis 36.19 - These *were* the sons of Esau, *who is Edom*, and these *were* their chiefs.

Genesis 36.43 - These were the chiefs of Edom, according to their dwelling places in the land of their possession. Esau was the father of the Edomites.

The Bible is repetitive for a purpose. The Lord doesn't want us to miss this point. He's cluing us in to the essence of Esau and the guiding factor of his heart and life which eventuated in his legacy of destruction - it is that he was Edom and his life bore the fruit of his Edom-ness.

Some of you know where his name 'Edom' came from. According to Lockyer's commentary the word means "red" or "red earth." He picked up this name back in Genesis chapter 25, verse 30. There we read this:

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.

Esau was a hunter. He had come in from the field and had the tummy rumbles. Jacob was making a lentil stew and Esau said he wanted it. Jacob, always the schemer, said, "I'll give you the stew if you give me your birthright." Esau agreed.

Now, in that time and culture, the birthright meant that you were going to inherit twice as much as your siblings would. I'll tell you, we eat lentils. They make a mean taco. But I don't think they're worth as much as Esau did that day. But what we learn about Esau starting right here and demonstrated throughout his life is that he was a man who was controlled by his earthly appetites. Whether it was his physical hunger or his desire for riches or his anger or his lust, he was always seeing red, like a bull going after that cape, and he lived life in pursuit of earthly appetites.

But sadly, we see that his life is a story not of fulfillment, but dissatisfaction, anger, broken relationships and ultimately separation from God.

He's always on the hunt. But, we should notice that his hunting always led to disappointment. The first time it wore him out and led to him giving away his birthright. The second time he makes a kill, but in the mean time he misses his blessing.

Here's what's interesting and where we come in: As Christians we have within us the potential to make these choices. To be either the person who follows after God, though we do it imperfectly like Jacob, or to be the person who pursues earthly appetites. The Bible refers to it as carnality.

Now, we know just how rich our inheritance is. We know that there are stores of rewards for those who will live in pursuit of heaven. We know that only God can satisfy and the best the world can offer is vanity. But we also know that living a spiritual life doesn't always *seem* to be as gratifying as some of the things the world is offering us right now. There are these competing tastes out there vying for our reception and inviting us to their table, but each path will produce a very different meal, a very different outcome.

As we see the outcome of Esau's life and choices, it should encourage us to cultivate a taste for spiritual things.

Let's look at a couple of his specific missteps from Genesis 36. First, look at verse 2.

Genesis 36.2-3 - Esau took his wives from the daughters of Canaan: Adah the daughter of Elon the Hittite; Aholibamah the daughter of Anah, the daughter of Zibeon the Hivite; and Basemath, Ishmael's daughter, sister of Nebajoth.

When we study the life of Esau, we see that it wasn't just his stomach that thought carnally, he followed that pattern in his personal and romantic relationships as well.

He didn't find true love and he didn't go looking for a wife who would honor the God of his father. No, we learn something very much the opposite. We're told in Hebrews chapter 12 that he was a fornicator and a profane person. And at least one of his marriages happened out of his anger toward his parents and his desire to hurt them.

Genesis 28.8-9 - Esau saw that the daughters of Canaan did not please his father Isaac. So Esau went to Ishmael and took Mahalath the daughter of Ishmael, Abraham's son, the sister of Nebajoth, to be his wife in addition to the wives he had.

That's a *GREAT* way to start a marriage! Ladies, that's what you're looking for, right? A man who wants to marry you so he can get revenge on his parents?

We see Esau making relationships with these women of Canaan. He found himself one Hittite, one Hivite and an Ishmaelite. Not believers. Not pure. Not in pursuit of God.

Now let's turn this on ourselves for a moment and expand it beyond just marriage and think about our personal entanglements. Our friendships and partnerships. Those relationships are significant to God because those relationships are going to powerfully influence our relationship with *Him* and the choices we make in life. There are many times in the Scriptures where we're taught and warned that if we tangle ourselves up with people who aren't in pursuit of God, they're going to corrupt our character or trip us up or slow us down. The Bible says, "Don't be unequally yoked with someone who isn't out to please the Lord." Does that mean we remove ourselves for any contact with the world? Of course not. That would be impossible and that's the opposite of the mission we're called to undertake as God's ambassadors to the world. *But* we should be warned and very careful about who we're hitching up to. Those personal relationships, those people we're close with, are they people who please our Father, or are they on another path?

Let's drop down to verse 6 of chapter 36.

Genesis 36.6-8 - Then Esau took his wives, his sons, his daughters, and all the persons of his household, his cattle and all his animals, and all his goods which he had gained in the land of Canaan, and went to a country away from the presence of his brother Jacob. For their possessions were too great for them to dwell together, and the land where they were strangers could not support them because of their livestock. So Esau dwelt in Mount Seir. Esau *is* Edom.

Here we see that Esau made a conscious decision to choose his possessions over the presence of his brother Jacob. There was a practical element to his decision - the land wasn't big enough for all their stuff, but rather than unload some of his stuff Esau decided to move away and rally to his possessions. Showing that *this* was what was important and significant to him.

The thing is, it wasn't only Jacob's presence that he was leaving, it was the God of his father that he was moving away from as well. In this era, God would come and appear to Abraham and to Isaac and speak to them. The Lord had continued this method and had been speaking to Jacob and appearing to him and giving him visions. Esau, of course, would know these things. But when the choice came, he chose the possessions over the Provider.

Eason's Bible Survey points out that the country of Seir was a desert. There were some springs there and some rainfall on the mountain, but it was a far cry from the good land that the Lord was leading Jacob's descendants to. But that's where Esau went and built his life. He had 5 boys and a bunch of grandsons. They were very successful from one way of thinking. They had stuff and power and became great. But it was only a temporary, earthly greatness.

Take a look at verse 15.

Genesis 36.15-19 - These were the chiefs of the sons of Esau. The sons of Eliphaz, the firstborn son of Esau, were Chief Teman, Chief Omar, Chief Zepho, Chief Kenaz, Chief Korah, Chief Gatam, and Chief Amalek. These were the chiefs of Eliphaz in the land of Edom. They were the sons of Adah. These were the sons of Reuel, Esau's son: Chief Nahath, Chief Zerah, Chief Shammah, and Chief Mizzah. These were the chiefs of Reuel in the land of Edom. These were the sons of Basemath, Esau's wife. And these were the sons of Aholibamah, Esau's wife: Chief Jeush, Chief Jaalam, and Chief Korah. These were the chiefs who descended from Aholibamah, Esau's wife, the daughter of Anah. These were the sons of Esau, who is Edom, and these were their chiefs.

And look at verse 31.

Genesis 36.31 - Now these were the kings who reigned in the land of Edom before any king reigned over the children of Israel.

They were quite the power family. But they spent their lives in the wilderness. They built up clans and cities and kingdoms that are gone. And their earthliness turned very quickly into animosity toward spiritual things and spiritual people.

When the Israelites came out of captivity in Egypt, the very first enemy they have are the Amalekites. Amalek was the grandson of Esau. By Exodus chapter 17 there was no memory of their relation to Jacob's descendants and they attack Israel.

Later, in Numbers chapter 20, the Israelites come to the border of the country of Edom on their way to the Promised Land and ask to pass through and the Edomites refuse. They slow down their progress toward where God was leading them. They were worried about their fields and their vineyards and their stuff. Those earthly appetites kept rearing their ugly heads in opposition to the Lord.

Later as the generations go on, the Edomites proved to be a consistent enemy of Israel, always helping other armies who attacked her. They even aided Babylon when they came against God's people, only to themselves be destroyed by the army they had previously aligned with.

Esau's story is a very sad story. It's a sad legacy of sin and destruction. He shows us what happens to a person who is always looking for gratification without thinking about what it will mean in the

future. He only wanted his birthright when it was time to cash in. After they reconciled, he only wanted to be around Jacob until it got in the way of his stuff. He and his descendants kept trying to do great things, but they wanted to do them apart from the great God.

In the end, the family of Edom became enemies of God and they were judged and destroyed.

So how can this speak to us tonight?

Well, if you're here and you're not a Christian, you need to realize that you're Esau. By being here you've been exposed to the God of the Bible. He's a God who speaks and makes plans for His people. He reveals Himself. But if you don't believe in Him and follow Him then you're like Esau living in the wilderness. Going from hunt to hunt hoping to find some satisfaction somewhere, but you can't. Because only God can truly satisfy. And those appetites you're feeding in your life, the anger and the greed and the lust are ultimately going to ruin your life and send you to eternal destruction in hell. Tonight you need to make the choice to follow God and leave behind your earthliness.

But, for the majority of us who are Christians here tonight, the application is simple. We too need to be sure we've left our earthliness and our carnality, choosing instead to develop spiritual appetites. The story of Jacob and Esau reminds us that as believers there is a struggle between two natures in our hearts. The spiritual man and the carnal man. We're to choose to walk not in the flesh but in the Spirit.

Here's what the apostle Paul said in Romans chapter 8:

Romans 8:5-9 - For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those *who live* according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded *is* death, but to be spiritually minded *is* life and peace. Because the carnal mind *is* enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God. But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His.

The Lord told us to hunger and thirst for righteousness. But, you know, those are acquired tastes! I came across an article the other day citing a paper on how to acquire a taste for a new food. Some of the statements are interesting. It says:

“Why set out on a chase for new satisfactions when my own are immediate and available without effort? The answer is that acquired tastes can be rewarding. Acquired taste jump-starts new satisfactions where I do not initially find them. Through acquired taste, I grow in my capacity to enjoy what the [food] has to offer.

..acquired taste [is] a form of intentional belief acquisition...distinguishing it from ordinary or discovered taste.”

When we see these 2 brothers, Jacob and Esau, we see that Jacob was by no means perfect. But the fundamental difference in his story is that he pursued God rather than some appetite that was immediately available. In the end, the Lord was able to grow him and use him and satisfy him.

So let's choose to not walk the road that Esau walked. Let's pursue God and trust Him to be the provider, being nourished by His word and His living water, being hungry and thirsty for righteousness and the presence of the Spirit of God.