

Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Gen. 20-33)

Abraham had great faith that we are called upon to follow (Gal. 3:7; Rom. 4:12). Still, there were times in his life when he struggled. For example, in addition to the failed attempt to have Hagar produce the child of promise (Gen. 16), Genesis 20 records

Abraham going to Egypt and telling the king that Sarah was his sister, which led Abimelech to think she would be free to be with him. The Lord put a stop to this before something disastrous happened.

Though Abraham and Sarah were older, “at the appointed time of which God had spoken to him,” Sarah conceived and bore a son, named Isaac (Gen. 21). Ishmael, Hagar’s son by Abraham, mocked Isaac, and this created a problem that resulted in Hagar and Ishmael having to leave. God still blessed Ishmael because he was Abraham’s son.

The greatest test of Abraham’s faith came when God told him to take Isaac and offer him as a sacrifice (Gen. 22). Abraham did what God said, taking Isaac to the appointed place. God prevented the sacrifice, as Abraham demonstrated total trust in Him. So great was this trust that the Hebrews writer says that Abraham believed God would raise Isaac from the dead (Heb. 11:17-19). The episode shows that it was not God’s intent to have Isaac actually sacrificed, but rather to give Abraham an opportunity to



show absolute trust. The event typologically points to the sacrifice of Jesus.

When Sarah died, Abraham purchased a piece of the land for her burial (Gen. 23).

Abraham then asked his servant to go back to

Abraham’s home in order to find Isaac a wife (Gen. 24). The servant did that, and by the Lord’s help, he found a young woman named Rebekah. She came back with the servant and became Isaac’s wife.

Abraham remarried and had other children. He died at the age of one hundred seventy-five (Gen. 25:8), having become one of the greatest examples of faith in the Lord. God’s plans through his descendants would continue. Ishmael also had many descendants, but God was true to His promise to carry out His will through Isaac.

Rebekah could not have children, so Isaac prayed and God answered (Gen. 25:21). Rebekah conceived twins, and the Lord told her that “two nations” were in her womb. One would serve the other. The first to be born was Esau, but Jacob held onto Esau’s heel as they were born. Esau became a skillful hunter much loved by his father Isaac. Jacob was loved more by his mother Rebekah.

Esau came in hungry one day from the field. Jacob was cooking a stew, and Esau begged

Jacob for some. Jacob told Esau he could have some if Esau gave over his birthright. Esau agreed, and for some food gave up one of the most important inheritances he had (Gen. 25:27-34; see also Heb. 12:15-17).

Isaac lived near the Philistines for a time, making the same mistake Abraham had made in calling his wife his sister. Still, the Lord blessed him (Gen. 26). Because of some quarrels over wells, Isaac moved away and came to Beersheba. There the Lord reiterated His promises that He had given to Abraham (Gen. 26:24), “so he built an altar there and called upon the name of the Lord” (vs. 25).

When Isaac got older and lost his sight, he called Esau to hunt and cook for him so that he could bless Esau before he died (the oldest son received a special blessing). Rebekah overheard and helped Jacob deceive Isaac. Jacob dressed up like Esau, cooked a savory dish, then went in to Isaac and pretended to be Esau. The trick worked and Jacob received the blessing that should have gone to Esau (Gen. 27). When Esau found out what Jacob did, he bore a grudge and determined to kill Jacob after Isaac died.

Rebekah told Jacob to leave and go back to her home to her brother Laban. Isaac wanted him to find a wife there (Gen. 28). As Jacob left he had a dream and God gave him the same promises He had given to Abraham and Isaac. Jacob would later return to this place to seek the Lord.

Jacob came to Laban’s and fell in love with his daughter Rachel. Jacob agreed to work for seven years, but Laban tricked Jacob into marry Rachel’s older sister Leah. Jacob continued to work for Laban so that he could also have Rachel (Gen. 29). Leah was the first to have children, then God blessed

Rachel to have sons. Altogether Jacob had twelve sons and one daughter (Gen. 30). This is the foundation for the tribes of Israel.

God greatly blessed Jacob, and Laban was blessed, too. The time came, though, for Jacob to leave, and after many years of working for Laban, he came back to the promised land. One of the more significant events occurred when Jacob wrestled with a “man” who blessed him. The blessing was from God, and Jacob’s name was changed to Israel (Gen. 32:24-32).

Jacob feared meeting Esau again, but when they met Esau no longer wanted to kill him. Jacob eventually settled in Shechem, in the heart of the land.

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