

Reading: Genesis Chapters 27-31

Isaac and Rebekah had grown old and they were sad because they didn't have any children. Isaac prayed to God to give them a child, and God listened to Isaac and answered his prayers. God blessed them with twin boys. Twins are almost exactly alike both in appearance and habits, yet other twins are quite different, looking and behaving differently. So it was with Jacob and Esau.

Now God knew what sort of boys they would turn out to be even before they were born, and he knew what sort of men they would grow up to be. God knew that Jacob would grow up to love and serve Him, while Esau would have very little interest in God or the promises he had made to his grandfather Abraham.

And so the boys grew up with very different interests. Esau, who was the elder, loved hunting, and he was a strong, hairy man, fond of the open air and smelling of the animals which he hunted and brought home on his powerful shoulders. Jacob, the younger, was a quiet boy, with a smooth skin, who loved to stay at home and tend the sheep. Isaac loved Esau, Rebekah loved Jacob, it is very wrong for parents to favour one child more than another.

When Isaac grew very old, Esau as the eldest son should have become the head of the family and taken on the responsibilities, he should have been interested too in the promise God had made to Abraham about the good land he was going to give to them and the great nation they were going to grow into, but Esau was not interested; Jacob was, he no doubt wished he had been the eldest son.

While Jacob was eating his pottage (type of lentil soup because it was red) Esau came from the field feeling faint and Esau asked Jacob to give him some pottage. And Jacob said, sell me this day your birthright, and so Esau sold his birthright to Jacob for the pottage.

When Isaac was old, and he was losing his eyesight, he called Esau his eldest son and asked him to go out into the field and get him some venison (deer) and to make him savoury meat, so he may eat and give a special blessing to Esau before he died, Rebekah heard of this and was determined that Jacob should receive the blessing instead, so while Esau was out catching venison Rebekah asked Jacob to fetch a baby goat so she could make savoury meat for Isaac. So Jacob took it into his father Isaac and Isaac blessed him. Now when Esau returned and found that Jacob had been blessed in place of him he was very angry and said that he would kill his brother Jacob after his father's death.

Now neither parent was right. They had been told that Jacob was to be the one whom God would bless, so Isaac was wrong in wishing to bless Esau, Rebekah was wrong in deceiving Isaac. She should

have left these things to God, who can do all things. He would see that Jacob was blessed.

There is a saying that "cheats never prosper". Jacob paid for his deception by having to run away from home to get away from his brother Esau who threatened to kill him. He fled to Rebekah's brother Laban in Haran. Now Jacob started on his long journey to Haran. Now Jacob's first night away from home, with a stone for his pillow, he dreamed of a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. And God spoke to Jacob and told him that he was not alone, God would be with him on all his long journey and eventually bring him home again, if he would love and serve Him.

At the end of Jacob's journey, he met Rachel at the well of Haran and he helped her to water her father's sheep. Rachel was Jacob's cousin and when she heard this she took Jacob to her father's house. Now Jacob was willing to work for his Uncle Laban for 7 years without wages in order to be given Rachel for a wife. Jacob had several wives and 12 sons and after many years Jacob set out for home, back to Isaac and Rebekah, he arrived home in time to see his father Isaac again before his death, Rebekah had since died, and his brother Esau came to meet him in quite a friendly way, having forgiven him for his deception, God also forgave Jacob and gave him a new name "Israel", Prince of God.

God always keeps his promises. He kept his promise given before Esau and Jacob were born that Jacob would be the important one; he kept his promise to keep Jacob safe while he was away and bring him safely back home to the promised land.

Point to remember:- God always keeps his promises.