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**Day 12 - January 12**

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**Period of the Patriarchs (2100 -1525 BCE)**

***Trouble Between Jacob and Esau***

***Jacob Leaves for Haran***

**Readings: *Genesis 26:34-28:22***

***Reflections:***

- Esau marrying two pagan wives is a simple two verse example of how compromising the Lord's best will create problems. Like the old phrase states, "what appears to be good is the enemy of the best."
- Now it is Rebekah who had received the word from the Lord that the older would serve the younger. Although this looks like deception and something wrong, it is actually in line with what God said to her. It may actually be Esau (assuming Rebekah told Esau the word from the Lord) that may be sinning by trying to give his blessing to his favorite son, rather than the one the Lord had chosen. This is another example where in Scripture you must look closely at what is taking place. What appears to be wrong is actually advancing the purposes of God.
- What is interesting is that Jacob is labeled as a deceiver and all the evidence would point that way, but it was actually in all these things that seemed to be wrong or inappropriate that God was actually completing his higher purposes. Again, this is a great example of not judging by appearances but looking at what God's heart is and his long term purposes.
- In the end, Esau wants to kill Jacob and we see that envy is causing him to repeat what we saw with Cain and Abel. As we "decide for ourselves what is right and wrong" we can easily start to judge others and in that judgment start to hate those that oppose us or don't do what we want them to do.
- Rebekah comes up with a legitimate reason to send Jacob away with Isaac's blessing. Isaac's blessing makes the direct connection between Jacob, who will be called Israel, and Abraham. The promise of a nation-sized family is repeated here and the direct connection to Abraham reminds us that this community is to be a community rooted and grounded in a deep trust relationship with God.
- Esau's immediate reaction to take a foreign wife out of spite reveals the rebellion in his heart. It may have not been obvious before God had worked, but now it is plain for

everyone to see. What God does is based on people's hearts, not on outward appearances. So what looks wrong on the outside can be completely right on the inside. Only God has all the most important facts to deal with. "But the Lord said to Samuel, 'Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The Lord does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.'" (1 Samuel 16:7)

- Jacob's dream is a significant sign affirming the plans God has for him. One of the main ways God speaks to his people is through dreams (see Joel 2). The image of the staircase or ladder indicates that that this land was going to be a place of divine connection, where God and his angels came to work on planet earth. We see in this vision again the desire for God to have intimate friendship with us. The image of Jacob being at "the gate of heaven" or at "the house of God" reveals that the place of intimate connection with God is first and foremost a spiritual connection, not one tied to a particular holy building. Later, the tabernacle and temple will be this meeting place but initially the sense of connecting with God was something that just happened when Jacob trusted God. The affirmation of the promise, God now restating the promise of land and a nation-sized family; and the experience of God's presence overwhelm Jacob. We see that fear still grips his heart as he encounters God. Only later with the coming of the Spirit to reveal the depth of God's love for us will God's perfect love remove fear from our hearts (1 John 4:18).
- Jacob responds by setting up a pillar as a place of worship to be a future reference point, a stake in the ground. He states that if God provides, he will follow God, worship God and give him the first fruits of all he has, one tenth or a tithe. This again sets the stage for the law Moses will give that will contain both the direction to make a tabernacle and teaching around giving a tithe. This is a foreshadowing of what God will later reveal to Jacob's descendents. The key point to note is the centrality of relationship. The notion of meeting together and helping each other through sharing what we have is the most fundamental aspect of living as intimate friends. If you spend quality time together and share what you have with the other person, you will have a close friendship with them. Our relationship with God is really that simple.