

Old Testament Lesson # 10
Birthright Blessings; Marriage in the Covenant
(Genesis 24-29)
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(Through great wisdom and masterful craftsmanship, the Lord used similitudes in the lives of prophets (See Hosea 12:10; Bruce R. McConkie*) to reveal much of Christ's life, and also of His works in the Latter-days. This means while **many actions of Rebekah and Jacob seem unrighteous, they were similitudes or prophecies of the future. So we should be careful not to make hasty judgments concerning their true character**).

I. There are great differences between a “contract marriage” and a “covenant marriage.”

A. Contracts are manmade devices, and are therefore more easily broken; **they do not extend beyond death.**

B. **God is an essential part of a covenant marriage.** It can only be broken due to serious sin, and when sealed through the Holy Priesthood, **does not end at death.**

C. The Lord Himself introduced Covenant Marriage to Adam and Eve.

1. The Lord sealed them as man and wife under His Priesthood, and made them “One Flesh.” **Actually being “One Flesh” means it can no longer be divided.**

II. The challenge for Abraham was how to help his *children* obtain the blessings of a Covenant Marriage.

A. He began by sending a servant to find a righteous wife for Isaac (Gen. 24: 2-4).

B. The servants' reliance upon the Lord added to the likelihood he would be successful (Gen. 24:12-14).

C. Definitely Rebekah's great kindness, and her willingness to wed Isaac after hearing his story, shows she would be a good wife and keep her covenants.

III. We too face challenges in marrying or helping our family marry in the covenant.

A. We too would be wise to seriously “look for” one who is willing to keep covenants.

B. Nevertheless, some marriages, when begun with that in focus, still end in divorce.

That does not necessarily mean one married the “wrong” person.

1. For often people change, or do not live up to their potential.

2. Remember the many saints the Lord called to leadership in the early days of the Church, but who then fell away and did not continue in the covenant path.

3. With marriages, there are comforts promised to those who are left alone, if they remain faithful to the Lord and His covenants.

4. Those who never have opportunity to marry are promised all blessings.

IV. Esau made many wrong choices which kept him from his covenant blessings.

A. Esau had “birthright blessings” which held special significance (See *BD* p. 625).

B. But he gave up those blessings for a mess of pottage, or things of the world (Gen. 25:29-34; Gen. 27:41).

C. When marrying, he chose wives who were not righteous (Gen. 26:34-35; 27:46).

V. Because of *her* righteousness, Rebekah was blessed to know ahead of time that more special blessings were soon to come forth (Gen. 27:6-10).

A. While we might be tempted to judge Rebekah's actions, **remember she had been blessed to see beforehand that Jacob was the one meant to receive the *greater* blessings of the covenant (Genesis 25:21-26). For the Lord knew Esau's heart.**

B. We too can we be forewarned to make or help children make right choices.

1. A wise sister shared that one of her sons excitedly introduced her to a young woman he hoped to marry. In this case, his mother did not feel good about it. Rather than making any criticism, however, she encouraged him to take the opportunity to see her in a home setting, and how she dealt with family, etc. After doing so, he came to realize that she had many strong shortcomings in this area, and decided she was not the right one after all.

VI. Jacob made a right choice by travelling a long way to find a faithful woman (Gen. 28:1-5; 29:1-10).

A. Not only did he find two good wives, but because of his righteous desires, the **Lord showed him a vision at Bethel, [the "House of God]," where the concept of the temple was given to him --- the place where Eternal covenants with spouses and God are made.**

1. Note here he also made covenants to pay his tithes (See Gen 28:10-22 and "Bethel-the House of God" in *BD*, p. 621).

B. We should recognize through Jacob's **experiences the interconnection between temples and marrying in the covenant, as well as the connection between temple blessings and the paying of tithes.**

1. Tithes are more than just monetary offerings. **They are physical witnesses that we are keeping our part of our covenant with the Lord.**

VII. Yes, we must keep our covenants.

A. As Esau was diverted from his blessings, so can we be. General authorities have said pride and selfishness are the biggest threats to marriages.

B. Here are important steps to keep us on the right way after temple marriage.

1. Continual temple attendance *of both parties* of the marriage will help keep it on the right path.

2. Some couples find doing sealings as a couple helps reinforce the beautiful promises they have been given.

3. The truth is The Lord provides many resources to keep marriages sacred. One leader says one way to take greater advantage of them is to simplify our lives. Simplification leaves more time for family and couple prayer, Family Home Evening, temple attendance, reading scriptures, etc.

VIII. **The Lord must be a party to the covenant.** And when we remember Him in our lives, we are more likely to succeed. Thus it is helpful to know these OT Scriptures contained many witnesses of Jesus the Christ, to help us remember Him.

A. ***The Purchase of the Birthright:*** Jacob witnessed of Christ who would make the true covenant, and thus make the birthright available by purchasing it with His blood. ***He purchased it for his righteous followers and co-heirs.***

B. *The Greater Blessing*: Jacob, like Christ, appeared in a form which was unrecognized. He came in the skins of a goat. Christ came unrecognized as a scapegoat and a sacrificial goat foreordained to bear men's sins. Jacob made a savory offering. **Christ's offerings were of His own flesh, and the wine of His blood.** Because of these offerings, Christ and His covenanted people will receive the greatest blessings --- Exaltation.

C. *Jacob removed the covering of the Well* (Gen. 29:1-14).

Jacob taught of the Messiah as the True Bridegroom. When Jacob sought a wife, he met her by a well, where a great stone covered the water. Jacob removed the stone sealing the well so his hoped-for bride and the sheep of his kinsmen might be watered. This incident was prophetic of our Savior.

Centuries later, Jesus appeared at that same well. In response to a woman's question as to whether **he was greater than Jacob, the Savior taught**, "whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst: ... the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life" (John 4:14). **Thus He was showing that Jacob at the well taught of Him!**

After Jesus' death, He was sealed in a tomb with a great stone rolled over it. Christ fulfilled Jacob's acts and His own words to the Samaritan woman **when His life poured out of that stone tomb. The "Fountain Everlasting" burst forth, bringing waters of new life to all. No more would stones seal up the dead.**

And because Jesus, as Bridegroom, removed that stone, those who covenant in marriage under His laws can have their marriage eternally. They can truly be "One" --- never to be separated again.

IX. **Jacob also foreshadowed the Latter-day covenants in his relationship to Rachel.**

A. Rachel, the highly desired but last wife, was barren for a long time, but finally bore Joseph.

B. Joseph's delayed birth was a witness of Christ's Latter-days Church, which would not be established until the latter-days, but would be the most fruitful to the Lord.

C. We will see more in future lessons just how greatly Joseph's life bore witness of Joseph Smith and of the Restoration of the Gospel in the Latter-days (See 2 Nephi 3).

"Many [ancient prophets] lived in special situations or did particular things that singled them out as types and patterns and shadows of that which was to be in the life of [Christ]," Bruce R. Mc Conkie, *Promised Messiah*, p. 448.