

## Esau and Jacob: Two Loves Genesis 35:16-36:43

Read Genesis 35:16-36:43.

Why did God include this passage of Scripture?  
How is this passage profitable for you?

How well do you know the love of God towards you?

Nothing, absolutely nothing, is more vital to your relationship with God than knowing rightly His love for you.

At the very core of the relationships between the members of the Trinity is love.

**1 John 4:8** <sup>8</sup> Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.

But it is not enough to contemplate the truth of God's character of love. You must study to know the depth of God's love for you.

If I was limited to one biblical subject on which I could teach, it would be the love of God towards those who are in Christ Jesus.

Redeeming love has been my theme... and will be till I die.

Where would you go to learn about God's love for you?  
How would you go about studying the practical ways in which God demonstrates his love for you?

The first and best place to go is the cross.

**Romans 5:8** <sup>8</sup> but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

But Scripture also presents to us God's love by way of a contrast.

It may not be clear to you yet, but one of the greatest hindrances to your rightly knowing the love of God for you is the false belief that God loves all people equally.

Love is more than a feeling. Love is a feeling that moves God to action. And the primary action flowing from God's love is our redemption.

**If the nature of God's love for those who will spend eternity in hell is no different than the nature of God's love for those who will experience eternity with Him in the New Heavens and the New Earth, then it is of no true value to be loved by God.**

God surely loves all people in some sense. All men are created in His image. He sends rain on the just and the unjust. And He commands us to carry the gospel to the whole world, many of whom will reject Christ and suffer eternally in hell.

But God's love towards those who are redeemed is infinitely greater than the love He has for those He has not acted to redeem. And God wants those whom He is saving to know the greatness of His love towards them.

God's love for His own people is infinitely greater than His love for those who are not His people.

If this were not the case, then it would be of no benefit to be His people.

It is important to recognize that everyone who can rightly claim to be "of" God's people now, were at one time, "not" of God's people. One of the reasons why the Bible speaks of our eternal election is to help explain to us that it was God's eternal love for us that brought us into the fold.

God's love for His own people does not begin when they believe in Christ. He loved them long before they ever thought of believing in Christ. He loved

them while they were lost in their sin. And it is God's love that awakened them to believe in Christ.

One of the reasons we should not condemn unbelievers but rather call them to Christ is that we do not know if God has chosen to pour out His love upon them but has not yet done so. Until a person breathes their last breath, we should hold out hope that the love of God will save them.

This being said, for those of you who are believing in Christ Jesus, God wants you to know that love that He has for you is greater than His love for those not being saved.

And God shows His people this through establishing Esau as a nation.

Esau was born into the Covenant. He bore in his flesh the same sign of God's covenant love as Jacob.

But Esau is in the process of leaving God's blessing.

Esau is an example of an apostate, someone who was in the covenant, but who later rejected the covenant promises.

But if Esau is an example of an apostate, why do we need to know what happened to his descendants?

It is in comparison with Esau's descendants, the Edomites, that God will contrast the greatness of His covenant love for Israel.

In Jacob's sons, we have the beginnings of the nation of Israel.

In Esau's sons, we have the beginnings of the nation of Edom.

These two nations exist throughout the entirety of the rest of the OT. This is a period of more than a thousand years. Obviously, much more time is given to God's interaction with Israel, than to His interaction with Edom. But Edom will continue to be a player in the story throughout.

In the last book of the OT, Malachi, God is impressing upon Israel His deep love for them. Like us, they are questioning that love.

Listen to the interaction.

**Malachi 1:1-4** The oracle of the word of the LORD to Israel by Malachi.

<sup>2</sup> "I have loved you," says the LORD.

But you say, "How have you loved us?"

"Is not Esau Jacob's brother?" declares the LORD.

"Yet I have loved Jacob <sup>3</sup> but Esau I have hated.

I have laid waste his hill country and left his heritage to jackals of the desert."

<sup>4</sup> If Edom says, "We are shattered but we will rebuild the ruins," the LORD of hosts says, "They may build, but I will tear down, and they will be called 'the wicked country,' and 'the people with whom the LORD is angry forever.'"

One way to define God's love for his people is that it is enduring. God may become angry with His people's rebellion for a moment, but that anger does not last. He continues to work to redeem His children.

But not so with those who have walked away from God's covenant promises. God has crushed Edom. And even if they try to rebuild from the ruins, God will again tear down. God is able to be angry with Edom forever.

If you are sitting here today, trusting in Jesus Christ, then God has put away His righteous anger towards you and acted towards you with Redeeming Love. And He has acted this way towards you, while not extending the same love towards those who have abandoned the covenant.

When Paul speaks his great statement of God's love in Romans 8, it is not by accident that he then launches into a discussion about God's love to Israel. And as a part of that discussion, he quotes Malachi.

**Romans 9:13** <sup>13</sup> As it is written, "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated."

It is through God's dealings with Israel that we see the nature and beauty of what it means to be loved by God. Of course, the culmination of that love is only found in Christ.

Genesis 35 and 36 are really the beginning of the contrast between two loves – one that redeems and one that does not.

The end of Genesis 35 gives us the beginning of Israel as a complete people. Genesis 36 gives us the nation that God would raise up as a foil, so His beloved people could see what it meant to not be loved.

Let's look at the text.

In the first part of Genesis 35, God has again met with Jacob. He has reaffirmed to Jacob all His covenant promises. And He has assured Jacob of his new name: Israel.

**Genesis 35:11** <sup>11</sup> And God said to him, "I am God Almighty: be fruitful and multiply. A nation and a company of nations shall come from you, and kings shall come from your own body.

But rather than this blessing occurring immediately, Jacob continues to experience pain and suffering.

It is always our experience of evil and pain and suffering that cause us to question God's love.

Jacob is again on the move. He is traveling in a southerly direction and will eventually arrive at his father's house in Hebron. His purpose must be fairly urgent. Otherwise, why would he travel when Rachel was so close to having her baby? Did he receive word that his father was ill?

Genesis 35:16-20.

What is the significance of Rachel's bearing of Benjamin and her subsequent death?

On a personal level, we know that Rachel's desire for children was motivated by envy.

**Genesis 30:1** When Rachel saw that she bore Jacob no children, she envied her sister. She said to Jacob, "Give me children, or I shall die!"

But rather than condemning Rachel for her sinful attitude, God continues His work of redemption through her.

Her envy does not prevent God from blessing her with a son. He might have said, "There is no way I am giving you a son. That would only encourage your envy." But instead, God graciously gives Rachel a son.

**Genesis 30:24** <sup>24</sup> And she called his name Joseph, saying, "May the LORD add to me another son!"

After Joseph, Rachel prays for another son. Benjamin is an answer to that prayer. The underlying assumption is that children are a blessing, sons in particular.

Rachel's midwife knows this. She encourages Rachel with the thought that God has indeed answered her prayer and blessed her with another son, even if she will not live to watch him grow up.

And Rachel is encouraged. She names her son, Ben-oni. This means son of my sorrow. In the sorrow of her dying, God gives her a son.

Jacob does not like the name, so he changes it to Benjamin – son of my right hand.

We are to recognize that Rachel is being honored/loved in the bearing of Benjamin.

Benjamin is son number 12.

To modern day Americans, that may simply sound like a nightmare, or at a minimum, chaos.

But from the perspective of the Bible, 12 is the number of fullness.

I am not exactly why 12 is the number of fullness. But it is. Maybe connected to the 12 months of the year?

It is not a matter of “the more the merrier”. Eleven is too few. And 13 is too many. Twelve is just right.

The thinking that 12 is the ideal will run throughout Scripture.

Ishmael had 12 sons. (Gen. 25:13-16)

Jacob’s 12 sons will become the leaders of the 12 Tribes of Israel.

In the NT, Jesus will choose 12 Apostles. And after Judas is lost, it is necessary to choose another.

Picture a pie sliced into 12 pieces.

If you remove a piece, you no longer have a full pie.

And there is no room to add another piece.

So, we must think of this short story in two ways.

Rachel is full of sorrow because she knows she is dying and will not see her son grow up.

Rachel is blessed to bear the son who becomes the symbol of the fullness of God’s promised blessing.

Jacob’s sons will themselves grow into a large nation. But the nation will always be cut into 12 pieces.

Without a grasp of the importance of 12, you will miss the point of today’s passage.

Genesis 35:21-26.

In these verses all twelve sons of Jacob are named. God has established the foundation of what will become the nation of Israel.

The sons are listed according to their mothers. Favoritism and envy and rivalry will exist between the brothers. We will see this played out during the story of Joseph.

Even though Benjamin is born to Rachel near Bethlehem – the future birthplace of our Savior, we are told that Jacob's sons were born to him in Paddan-aram. This will have significance in a moment.

What is the point of Reuben's laying with Bilhah?

This story makes very clear that God's love for His people is not founded in their being better than other nations.

Reuben is motivated more by power than lust. Bilhah is Rachel's servant. Rachel has just died. Rachel was first in the heart of Jacob. Reuben, the firstborn son, does not want his dad giving priority to Bilhah or her sons. "By defiling Bilhah, he makes certain that with Rachel's death her handmaid cannot supplant Leah as chief wife."

I know it is confusing for us to understand, but Reuben is trying to establish his dominance in the family.

This makes clear to us that the real problem of covenant fulfillment lies in the corruption of those in the covenant.

Secondly, we can see that God does not treat His people with immediate justice.

In chapter 34, Simeon and Levi are so indignant over Dinah being sexually abused that they wipe out an entire village. Now, Reuben violates his father's concubine, and we hear nothing from Simeon and Levi, or any of the brothers.

We may not like Jacob's lack of response, but at least it is consistent.

What should be done?

Should Reuben be killed for his evil act? Bilhah was the mother of Dan and Naphtali. Why do they not rise up in judgment of Reuben?

A strong case can be made here for capital punishment.

**Deuteronomy 27:20** <sup>20</sup> "'Cursed be anyone who lies with his father's wife, because he has uncovered his father's nakedness.' And all the people shall say, 'Amen.'

But herein lies the tension that runs throughout Scripture.  
Reuben is in covenant relationship with God.  
If God kills Reuben now, then the fullness of Israel will be lost.  
The 12 piece pie will be missing a piece.

But if God does not judge Reuben immediately, where is God's righteousness?

Whenever God acts in mercy towards His people, He is violating His own justice.  
Whenever God acts to keep his promises of blessing given to Abraham, He is violating the covenant of works established with Adam in the Garden.

If you sin, you deserve to die.  
Every time God acts in mercy towards His people, He is opening Himself up to charges of being unjust.  
God's justice is not vindicated until Jesus declares on the cross, "It is finished."  
Until Jesus' death, God had left the sins of His own people unpunished.  
At the cross, God justly punishes Reuben's sin.

While God will not immediately punish Reuben's sin, God does not entirely ignore it either.  
Reuben's actions will come back to bite him.  
Instead of establishing his position, his actions rob him of his place as firstborn.  
Before Jacob dies, he will pronounce this over Reuben.

**Genesis 49:3-4** <sup>3</sup> "Reuben, you are my firstborn, my might, and the firstfruits of my strength, preeminent in dignity and preeminent in power. <sup>4</sup> Unstable as water, you shall not have preeminence, because

you went up to your father's bed; then you defiled it- he went up to my couch!

So, God does not ignore Reuben's sin, but neither is he cut off from the covenant.

Reuben's position in the kingdom of God will be altered, but he is not separated from that blessing entirely.

This can only be because Jesus will bear the full weight of Reuben's sin while he is on the cross.

If you are going to understand God's love towards Israel, you must understand that God's love is given in the face of their evil.

Because God loves evil people, He will transform them into His own image. But their transformation is not the condition upon which His love is built.

Genesis 35:27-29.

Jacob arrives to see his father before he dies.

Not much is said about this.

But we are to see Isaac's 180 years of life as an indication of God's faithfulness to him.

We are not to linger in reflection on Isaac.

Instead, we are to continue our comparison of Jacob and Esau.

Notice in verse 29 that Esau's name is written first.

He is the firstborn, after all.

As we compare Esau to Jacob, we are to remember that they both come out of the same family.

They both were heirs of the covenant promises.

The difference between the brothers is not based upon having different mothers.

They both bear the sign of circumcision on their body.

Esau and Jacob are together at Isaac's funeral. If Esau was humble enough to seek the Covenant Blessing in Jacob, he would have been blessed. Instead he will move away from that blessing.

Jacob and Esau are becoming two different peoples, two different nations, with two different destinies.

Genesis 36:1-14.

### **These are the generations of Esau (that is, Edom).**

Verse one is a title for the entire chapter. If you can remember, this phrase in the Hebrew is one word: Toledot. It marks off this section as a unit.

This is what becomes of Esau and his offspring.

Pull out the sheet I have given you of Esau's descendants.

Notice that the list of Esau's sons is broken up by his move to Seir!

Why is this important?

An important contrast with Jacob is being made.

Jacob's sons were born outside of the Promised Land and are moving into the Land.

Esau's sons were born inside the Promised Land and are moving away from the Land.

The two families are moving in opposite directions.

Those who are receiving God's covenant love are moving in the direction of the promises of the covenant.

Those who are abandoning God's covenant love are moving away from the promises of the covenant.

Consider your own heart. In which direction are you moving?

Esau has two motivations for leaving.

He wants to be “away from Jacob”. This is more than personal hatred. Jacob is the one through whom the blessing will come. Esau should humble himself and want to receive this blessing by being near to Jacob.

Covenant blessing is through attachment to a person, the covenant head. Ultimately, this head is Jesus Christ.

Anachronism: Esau moves to Seir before Jacob returns to the Promised Land. The anachronism is used to help us see the theological point: Esau wants to be away from Jacob. Esau represents all who seek blessing apart from God’s chosen covenant head.

This is ultimately seen in Jesus Christ. All the promises of blessing are found in Jesus Christ. You cannot find them anywhere else. Jews who think they possess the blessing while denying Jesus as Messiah are like Esau who abandoned the blessing in his time.

This is why Jesus calls his disciples to “abide in his love.” Do not walk away from Christ. You will end up like Edom.

Esau is also motivated by overcrowding. The Land is not able to support all the livestock and possessions of the two families. We are to be baffled by this? If God’s land is not fruitful enough to support these two budding nations, how will it support Israel when it is too numerous to be numbered? What is wrong with the Land? Why can it not support a prosperous people? This is not resolved.

It is important to see that God sets up the comparison, by working to establish Edom as a nation.

We are to see that there are 12 sons of Esau, just like Jacob.

Only we can arrive at 12 by manipulating the numbers. Cooking the books. Esau’s first two sons are not counted. But their 9 sons are, the grandsons of Esau.

Esau’s son by a concubine is not counted. Remember how Abraham sent Ishmael, the son of his concubine, away?

Amalek is only mentioned because of his prominence. He will become the father of the Amalekites, one of Israel's dreaded enemies.  
Then to come up with 12 the 3 sons to Esau's third wife are included.

Israel is a budding nation.  
Edom is a budding nation.

Genesis 36:15-19. (Chiefs of clans) Esau's development.

Once the forced number of 12 has been established to make the comparison, the symbolic number is abandoned.  
In the mention of chiefs, we are to see Edom's development as a nation.  
Israel will not be divided into clans until they are living in Egypt.

At this point, Esau is more advanced in her development as a nation than Jacob.

(Turn sheet over: Israel will later conquer the Canaanites)

Genesis 36:20-30. (The Sons of Seir – The Horites – inhabitants of Edom)

In this section, we see that the Edomites are dwelling together with the Horites.

The Horites lived in Seir before Esau arrived there.

The Edomites will intermarry with the Horites, but they will also conquer them.

**Deuteronomy 2:12** <sup>12</sup> The Horites also lived in Seir formerly, but the people of Esau dispossessed them and destroyed them from before them and settled in their place, as Israel did to the land of their possession, which the LORD gave to them.)

Deuteronomy helps us to see that God is working to help the Edomites conquer the Horites and live in their land. God wants Edom to be in relative proximity to His people. How else could they make the comparison.

The Land allotted to Edom is on the SW tip of the Dead Sea.

Genesis 36:31-39 (Kings of Edom) Further development.

As we continue to compare the nation of Edom to the nation of Israel, we see that Edom establishes her kingship before Israel.

Why do they do this?

Because God restrains Israel from establishing her own kingship. Why? Because God considers himself to be Israel's true king. Edom does not care about Yahweh being her king. She is free to develop her government as she chooses.

God will eventually give Israel a king. But it is done in preparation for sending His own King into the world, the Lord Jesus Christ.

One of the ways that God loves His people is to restrain and limit human power, while reserving the right to absolute rule for Himself. None of this is worked out in Genesis 36. But it does set up a contrast between Israel's kingship, and that of Edom.

Genesis 36:40-43. (Edom advances more quickly than Israel)

In the final four verses, we see a return to the list of clan chiefs. I have set this list alongside the previous list in vv. 15-19. (On the front) These lists are independent, probably coming from different sources. They may even refer to clan leaders from different periods.

Getting bogged down in the details is not profitable. What we need to see is that Edom is a nation that has been established by God, as Israel's neighbor.

For the most part, nations just come and go. Not Edom. God has specifically established them as Israel's neighbor.

In a temporal sense, we might even see that God has blessed Esau.

God explicitly told Rebekah that Two nations were in her womb. Therefore, God makes sure that Esau becomes a nation.

Edom's development also tells us that we should not expect the expressions of God's love to be measured simply by power, and numbers, and government.

Edom, at least initially, excels past Israel in all these categories. The love of God towards Israel will ultimately be measured in His commitment to forgive Israel of her sins and in His faithful determination to create in Israel a new heart – a heart that beats in tandem with His holy love.

It is not my purpose today to explore all the ways that God treats Israel differently than Edom.

My purpose is to help you see that God has established the comparison for you to better grasp the depth of his love for you.

Ultimately, Edom will no longer exist as a nation. In the end, Jesus will extend His reign over Edom.

**Psalm 108:5-10** <sup>5</sup> Be exalted, O God, above the heavens! Let your glory be over all the earth! <sup>6</sup> That your beloved ones may be delivered, give salvation by your right hand and answer me! <sup>7</sup> God has promised in his holiness: "With exultation I will divide up Shechem and portion out the Valley of Succoth. <sup>8</sup> Gilead is mine; Manasseh is mine; Ephraim is my helmet, Judah my scepter. <sup>9</sup> Moab is my washbasin; upon Edom I cast my shoe; over Philistia I shout in triumph." <sup>10</sup> Who will bring me to the fortified city? Who will lead me to Edom?

One of the privileges of being in covenant relationship with God, is knowing that God will never forget His people. Even when Israelites are living in oppressive subjection to the Babylonians, God gives them hope that He has not abandoned them.

Not so with the Edomites. They are called to repent and return to the blessing of God's covenant love. But if they refuse, they will be eternally crushed.

**Isaiah 34:1-10** Draw near, O nations, to hear, and give attention, O peoples! Let the earth hear, and all that fills it; the world, and all that comes from it. <sup>2</sup> For the LORD is enraged against all the nations, and furious against all their host; he has devoted them to destruction, has given them over for slaughter. <sup>3</sup> Their slain shall be cast out, and the stench of their corpses shall rise; the mountains shall flow with their blood. <sup>4</sup> All the host of heaven shall rot away, and the skies roll up like a scroll. All their host shall fall, as leaves fall from the vine, like leaves falling from the fig tree. <sup>5</sup> For my sword has drunk its fill in the heavens; behold, it descends for judgment upon Edom, upon the people I have devoted to destruction. <sup>6</sup> The LORD has a sword; it is sated with blood; it is gorged with fat, with the blood of lambs and goats, with the fat of the kidneys of rams. For the LORD has a sacrifice in Bozrah, a great slaughter in the land of Edom. <sup>7</sup> Wild oxen shall fall with them, and young steers with the mighty bulls. Their land shall drink its fill of blood, and their soil shall be gorged with fat. <sup>8</sup> For the LORD has a day of vengeance, a year of recompense for the cause of Zion. <sup>9</sup> And the streams of Edom shall be turned into pitch, and her soil into sulfur; her land shall become burning pitch. <sup>10</sup> Night and day it shall not be quenched; its smoke shall go up forever. From generation to generation it shall lie waste; none shall pass through it forever and ever.

Malachi 1:1-5 – Edom does not have any future because they are separated from the Covenant and not loved by God.

You have been born "in the land". Among God's people. Will you by faith remain in it? Or will you walk away from it like Esau?

I began this message with a question, "How well do you know the love of God towards you?"

God's redeeming love for you is greater than His love for others.

It is like night and day.

It is so much greater that His love for others looks like hate.

If this were not true, what benefit would it be to live under God's redeeming love.

**Ephesians 1:3-8** <sup>3</sup> Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, <sup>4</sup> even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love <sup>5</sup> he predestined us for adoption through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, <sup>6</sup> to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. <sup>7</sup> In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, <sup>8</sup> which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight

**Romans 8:35-39** <sup>35</sup> Who shall separate us from the **love** of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? <sup>36</sup> As it is written, "For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered." <sup>37</sup> No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who **loved us**. <sup>38</sup> For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, <sup>39</sup> nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from **the love of God in Christ Jesus** our Lord.

**2 Corinthians 13:14** <sup>14</sup> The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.