

Study Aids

Discussion Questions and Suggested Readings for “What’s the Message?” Lessons

Lesson Sixteen

Questions:

Why was it so important for Isaac, and later, Jacob to choose a wife from within the family of Abraham? Why was there this concern about marriage with the people of Palestine? Look at the following verses to help you with your answer: Exodus 34:10-16; Numbers 25:1-8; and Deuteronomy 7:1-5.

Esau felt that Jacob had cheated him two times in regard to what was “rightfully his” as the first-born, and he hated Jacob for it. It was the custom that the first-born received two-thirds of the estate as his inheritance, but he was so famished that he was “tricked” out of the larger portion because Jacob caught him in a moment of weakness. Isaac knew that God had declared before the boys were born that the elder would serve the younger, but Isaac intended to give the major share to Esau anyway. Then, to make matters worse, Rebekah decided God needed her help to make sure that Esau did not receive the blessing of Abraham, the blessing that would make him the father of the promised nation. So she and Jacob deceived the nearly blind Isaac into giving that blessing to Jacob. So here are the father and the mother both attempting to intervene in God’s plan. What are your thoughts on this whole twisted chain of events and behavior? Does it still happen today? Is the lesson of old still relevant?

Was the separation of God’s chosen people to be understood as a means to an end, or can it be seen as an end in itself? Is there any problem if separation is regarded as a goal to be achieved for its own sake?

Does the New Testament give us any guidance in answering the previous question? Consider Matthew 5:14-16 and Mark 2:15-17, and 4:21-22.