

Midrash - First Born and Second Born

by Jacob Prasch

The sermon explores the conflict between the firstborn and the secondborn in the Bible, highlighting the significance of the birthright and the relationship between the law and grace.

Duration: 1:08:57

Scripture: Genesis 25:22-23, Genesis 25:25, Hebrews 12:15-17

Topics: "Midrash"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker addresses the desire for instant gratification and quick-fix solutions in Christianity. He warns against being susceptible to false preachers who promise instant results and manipulate people for money. The speaker emphasizes the importance of valuing our birthright as children of God and not selling it for temporary pleasures. He also criticizes the Alpha course for not focusing on discipleship and baptism, and mentions a decline in church attendance despite the use of Alpha courses.

Transcript

Hello friends, this is Jacob Platt speaking to you today. Praise the Lord. Before we turn to the book of Genesis, Reshit, Genesis, come with me please, first of all, to the epistle to the Hebrews, chapter 12, verse 15.

Hebrews 12, 15, 16, and 17. The writer tells us, See to it that no one come short of the grace of God, that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble, and by it many be defiled. That there be no immoral or godless person like Esau, who sold his own birthright for a single meal.

For you know that even afterwards, when he desired to inherit the blessings, he was rejected, for he found no place repentant, though he sought for it with tears. See to it that no one come short of the grace of God. Can a Christian come short of the grace of God? Well, this is quite a subject and quite a question.

How does it happen? First of all, we have to understand that in the Greek text, this is what we call the subjunctive mood. The subjunctive mood is something which in the Greek language implies doubt. Implies doubt.

Very often in the King James Bible, the subjective mood will be indicated by the word, lest, L-E-S-T, lest. It implies doubt. Jesus told the Pharisees, quoting from Isaiah, Unless you turn with your eyes, turn to me,

see with your eyes and hear with your ears, and I heal them.

And in the translations of the King James it says, lest. In other words, it was possible for the Pharisees to repent and turn to Jesus. It was possible for them to have their spiritual deafness and their spiritual blindness removed.

It was possible. But it was not likely it was ever going to happen. So it is here in Hebrews 12.

Can someone come short of the grace of God? Can a Christian fall short of that grace? Yes. But it's not likely it will happen, providing we follow God's warning. The warning is not to be an immoral person like Esau, who sold his own birthright for a meal.

And then when he desired to get it back, he couldn't, because he found no place for repentance. We always interpret the Old Testament in light of the New Testament revelation of Jesus. Turn with me, please, to the book of Genesis, chapter 25.

Genesis, chapter 25. I'm reading now from verse 22. But the children struggled together within her, and she said, If it is so, why then am I this way? So she went to inquire of the Lord.

And the Lord said to her, Two nations are in your womb, and two people shall be separated from your bodies. The one people shall be stronger than the other. The older shall serve the younger.

And when the days to be fulfilled were delivered, behold, there were twins in her womb. Now the first came forth red all over like a hairy garment, and they named him Esau. Notice the word red, and how many times the color red occurs in this text.

And afterwards, in verse 26, his brother came forth with his hand holding on to Esau's heel. So his name was called Jacob, or in Hebrew, Yaakov, meaning heel. And Isaac was 60 years old when she gave birth to them.

And when the boys grew up, Esau became a skillful hunter, a man of the field. But Jacob, he was rather a peaceful man, living in tents. Now the word peaceful here means more complete from the Hebrew word shalom, meaning fullness, wholeness.

Now Isaac loved Esau because he had a taste for games. But Rebekah, or Rivka, loved Yaakov, or Jacob. And when Jacob had cooked stew, Esau came in from the field, and he was famished.

And Esau said to Jacob, Please let me have a swallow of that red stuff there. The word red. For I am famished, or it could be translated weary.

Therefore his name was called Edom. Edom. Edom is the Hebrew word meaning red.

There it is the third time. And Jacob said, First, tell me your birthright. And Esau said, Behold, I am about to die.

So of what use then is a birthright to me? And Jacob said, First swear to me. So he swore to him and sold his birthright to Jacob. Then Jacob gave Esau bread and lentil stew, and he ate and drank and rose and went on his way.

Thus Esau despised his birthright. And we as believers are told not to be like him, do not despise our birthright. First of all, there are different aspects of this particular story or narrative.

Jacob and Esau are patriarchs of Arab and Jewish nations. We have something in theology called a corporate solidarity. You've perhaps heard me mention it before.

That is where one person represents a larger group of people. In biblical typology, Jacob becomes the representation of the Jewish nations while Esau of the Arab nations. Jews are descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

Arabs are descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Esau who in turn intermarried with the descendants of Ishmael. The Jews have always remained in the character of Jacob and the Arab nations remain in the character of Esau. Let me explain.

They're both descendants of Abraham and loved by God, but there's a problem. Jacob supplanted his brother. Jacob was somebody who was always trying to attain the blessings and purposes of God by his own connivances and scheming.

And it kept backfiring on him, yet God loved him. He wound up in a dark night of the soul experience at the brook of Jabuch at a place called Peniel where he wrestled with the angel of the Lord. This angel of the Lord has the definite article in Hebrew Hamelach Adonai and it's known in Judaism as the Metatron.

Now the angel of the Lord is a Christophany. It is an Old Testament manifestation of Jesus. That is why Jacob saw the face of God when he wrestled with him.

At the end of this wrestling, Jacob was blessed by God but walked with a limp. He no longer trusted his greatest human strength anymore, but rather trusted God and he walked with a limp and was then reconciled to his brother. After having been broken by the Lord, whenever Jacob behaved like a new creation, whenever he behaved like a spiritual man, he was called by his new name that the angel gave him, Israel.

But whenever he went back to behaving in the character of his old ways, he was called Jacob in the book of Genesis. This is why you see in the prophetic writings of prophets like Isaiah the promises are for Israel and Jacob. Israel is the one who is spiritual.

Jacob is the one who is carnal. Israel involves the faithful remnants of Jews of the Old Testament and the messianic Jews, the Jewish believers in their Messiah of the New Testament, together with the Gentiles who have grafted in. The faithful remnants of Israel is what Galatians calls the Israel of God.

But Jacob is the Jewish people in their unsaved form. Notice both Jacob and Esau are given new names. You see when everyone meets Jesus they get a new name.

We have the name our parents gave us when we were born, but when we're born again, the book of Revelation tells us we have another name that is written in the book of life. And like Jacob, when we behave like new creations, God calls us by our new name that is in heaven. But when we behave carnally and like our old nature, and in accordance with the ways of the flesh, we are seen from heaven by the names our parents gave us.

Philip, Barbara, Henry, etc. But let's look more closely. Esau and Jacob.

You know, I honestly am convinced, there is no doubt in my mind, that contemporary events in the Middle East fulfill biblical prophecy. And the Jews are back in Israel being regarded for something called HaTekhapot HaSarach Yaakov, the time of Jacob's trouble, the great tribulation. That's what's going to happen in the Middle East.

The prophecies of Zechariah will be literally fulfilled, especially Zechariah 12 through 14, when Jesus comes back and establishes his millennial kingdom. However, having said that, while I agree that Israel as a nation and its rebirth fulfilled prophecy, and I support the right of the Jews to settle there, the prophet Ezekiel warns as did the Torah, You shall treat the sojourner among you as one of your own people. And there have been a number of injustices by the Israeli government against Israel.

Now I point out that this is partially provoked by militant Islamic extremists. It's partially provoked. Nonetheless, I also know there are times when things have happened that cannot be justified.

This was contrary to the law God gave the Jews. Now I would say this. It is not nearly as bad as the civil rights and human rights abuses I have seen in Muslim countries.

I have been in Muslim countries from Morocco to the Far East. What you saw happen in Kuwait with the murder and the pillage, murdering and raping Muslims, what happened in the war between Iran and Iraq, children being killed in human wave attacks. What you see happening in the strife between North and South Yemen.

I remember in Black September of 1970 when the late King Hussein of Jordan systematically exterminated 20,000 Palestinians in about a week. Nobody said a word. Whatever happens in terms of civil rights and human rights abuses in Israel is nothing like what the Arabs have done to each other.

In the name of Islam, most jihads have always been Muslims killing Muslims. Nonetheless, God gave the Jew the Torah and told them not to mistreat the foreigner who sojourns among you. It's sort of like what happened here in the old South Africa under apartheid.

The civil rights and human rights abuses under apartheid were bad. But they were not nearly as bad as what happened in Angola or Mozambique or Rwanda or the Central African Republic or Biafra or Ethiopia. It's not nearly as bad as what happened to black people at the hands of their fellow blacks.

But it was still wrong. And it was wrong in South Africa because South Africa had so much Christian influence. There was so much biblical influence in South Africa God held it more accountable.

So too, God holds the Jews more accountable because he gave them the Torah. On the other hand, Esau still despises his birthright. God gave the Arab nations all that land to the East.

He gave them Jordan, the Arabian Peninsula, the Gulf Space, the Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait. After the Islamic invasions, the Muslims from Arabia invaded North Africa going across Egypt. And they took the land belonging to the Moroccans and they took the land belonging to the Berbers and made it part of the Arab world.

A hundred and forty, a hundred and fifty million Arabs, some would say. All that money, all that land, all that oil. But they despised their birthright and covered a little land very, very small, smaller, much smaller than a single state in South Africa.

Nonetheless, the Arab nations are in the character of Esau and the Jewish nations in the character of Jacob. But just as Jacob and Esau were one day reconciled, a day will come when Jesus returns in his millennial reign when Jew and Arab are reconciled. This is part of what Isaiah chapter 19 prophesies.

Two nations are in your womb. That is but one aspect of this story. Another aspect is parental favoritism.

This is very sad. It says that Isaac loved Esau but Rebecca loved Jacob. This did not mean that Isaac did not love Esau or did not love Jacob equally.

And it didn't mean that Rebecca didn't love them equally. The problem is this. In the Hebrew language we only have one word for like and love.

Ahavah. Ahavah. Well in English we can distinguish between like and love with two words.

One for what you like and one for what you love. In Greek there are multiple words to describe love and like. But Hebrew has but one.

Therefore it would appear, reading the translation, that Jacob was loved by his mother and Esau was loved by his father, but that Jacob's father didn't love him and that Esau's mother didn't love him. It doesn't mean that, but it does mean they liked and they showed favoritism. This is not good.

It is very bad and it is spiritually and emotionally damaging to any child to show favoritism of one sibling above another. It is important that parents, and particularly Christian parents, show their children that they were all co-equally loved and valued. Nonetheless, having said that, let's get down to what it means for us.

Esau went on to break his parents' hearts. He despised his birthright, but he also married a non-believer, a pagan. And one of the surest things that will break the heart of any Christian parent is when a backslidden son or daughter forgot to marry somebody who was not a saved Christian.

But what does it again mean for you and I as believers? We have a conflict in the Bible. This conflict is between the firstborn and the second. It begins not with Esau and Jacob, nor does it begin with Isaac and Ishmael.

In fact, it goes all the way back to the beginning to Cain and Abel and continues on to Joseph and his brothers, the firstborn and the second. The conflict between the older and the younger, where the older will hate the younger. To understand this, turn with me please to the book of Galatians.

The book of Galatians where Saint Paul explains how we understand this particular phenomena in Genesis of the struggle between the first and secondborn. To explain it, Saint Paul uses something called Midrash. Midrash.

The way that Jewish rabbis interpreted the Bible in the day of Jesus and Paul in the second temple period in the first century, etc. We read this in verse 22 of Galatians chapter 4. For it is written Abraham had two sons, one son by the bond woman and one by the free woman. But the son of the bond woman was born according to the flesh, and the son of the free woman through the promise.

This is allegorically speaking, for these women are two covenants. One proceeding from Mount Sinai bearing children who are to be slaves, she is Hagar. Now this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children.

But the Jerusalem above is free, she is our mother. And according to Isaiah 54 it says, for it is written rejoice, O barren woman, who does not dare break forth and shout. You who are not in labor, for more are the children of the desolate than the one who has a husband.

And you brethren like Isaac are children of promise. But as at that time he who was born according to the flesh persecuted him who was born according to the spirit, so it is now also. But what does the Scripture say? Cast out the bond woman and her son, for the son of the bond woman shall not be an heir with the son of the free woman.

So then children, we are not children of a bond woman, but of the free woman. What does this tell us? The older will serve the younger. The one who was born first persecutes the one who is born second.

We are told the first born is the one who is born according to the flesh. The second born is the one born according to the spirit. The first born is the old creation.

The second born is the new one. We have two names because we are born twice if we are Christians. The first born is under the law.

What does the law mean? The law means we are enslaved. Let me explain. The Jews are a microcosm of the human condition.

Through Israel and the Jews, God teaches mankind about himself. The Torah or the law was given to the Jews not as a means of salvation but to show them that they need a Messiah to save them because they couldn't keep the law. The biggest section of the law is the sacrificial system to atone for the fact they couldn't keep the rest of it.

And since the temple was destroyed in 70 A.D., the Jews cannot keep the Torah anyway because there is no temple and no Levitical priesthood. When their ancient sages translated the Torah from Leviticus 17 they openly said without the shedding of blood there can be no forgiveness of sins. And it is written in the Talmudic literature that from the time Jesus died up until the temple was destroyed in 70 A.D. for 40 years before the temple was destroyed the people's sins were no longer forgiven according to the ancient rabbis.

It says in the Mishnah that a scarlet thread was hung before the Holy of Holies the Kodesh Kodeshim and if the people's sins were forgiven the scarlet cord on the Day of Atonement Yom Kippur would turn white but if it didn't it meant they were not forgiven. And it didn't turn white for 40 years before 70 A.D. In other words the rabbis tell us that from the time of Jesus until the temple was destroyed the sins of the Jewish people were no longer forgiven by the Torah. In actual fact the prophet Daniel prophesied in chapter 9 that the Messiah would come and die before the second temple would be destroyed.

And so the saga continues. The firstborn is under the law. What does the law mean? The law that God gave to the Jews teaches about our fallen nature.

It is what Paul calls in Galatians our pideon our teacher to teach us about our needs for somebody to save us because we can't save ourselves. Think of the law as gravity. The old time Plymouth brethren explained it wonderfully as did the Chinese Christian Watchman Nee.

Gravity says things will fall. Thus if we had a balloon that was not inflated it would fall because of the law of gravity. It must fall.

Well that's the way human beings are. They must sin. The most anybody who is not born again can choose is how when where but not if.

They must sin. Not if or not to do it. Only how when where etc.

Because of the law. They must fall. Because gravity makes things come to earth.

However if you were to take helium and pump it into that balloon something happens. A stronger law than gravity takes over. That law is called the law of buoyancy.

It is a stronger law in physics than gravity. The balloon will float because helium is lighter than air. If you blow CO2 carbon dioxide into a balloon that won't work.

That's like religion. It will only make the balloon fall slower at best but the balloon will still fall. It still wants to come down.

It is only when someone is born again they don't have to sin. Much the same as you put helium into the balloon the Holy Ghost comes inside of us. Christians have a free will.

We have a restored free choice at the cross. Unfortunately the extremes of Calvinism deny this. They deny that free will was restored at the cross when it was.

They say Christians cannot fall away otherwise they were never saved. This is simply not true. The Bible speaks directly and clearly of the apostasia of a falling away and you cannot fall away from something you never believed.

Hebrews 6 and Hebrews 10 make it very clear there's a danger and so does Hebrews 12 as we've already read. Nonetheless, let's understand this. The firstborn is under the law.

Gravity is the law that makes things fall. Buoyancy is a stronger law than gravity. If you don't want things to fall a stronger law has to take over.

This is what Paul means in 1 Corinthians 9. He says this in verse 20 And to the Jews I became as a Jew that I might win Jews. To those who are under the law as under the law though not being under the law myself that I might win those who are under the law. In other words he culturally identified with the people he was trying to reach.

To those who are without law as without law though not being without the law of God. He was not an antinomian but under the law of Christ that I might win those who are without law. If you were driving in South Africa and you crossed the border to Zimbabwe you would no longer be in the jurisdiction of South Africa you would be in the jurisdiction of Zimbabwe.

Does Zimbabwe have laws? Yes. Are they the same as South Africa's laws? No. Some are the same others are different.

Well so it is when you are born again you come out from under the law of sin and death represented by the law of Moses but you come under the law of Christ. I know some silly people today when you point to the Bible they say you are legalistic. You are under the law.

To begin with they don't know what legalism means. There are two kinds of legalism the first kind is trying to be saved by works. The second kind of legalism is gnomianism where you begin making religious rules that you can't do this and you can't do that concerning things not specifically found in the Bible.

That doesn't say we are saved by works it just tells people they have to keep rules after they have been saved apart from things written in the Bible. To begin with they don't know what legalism is. But more than that what they mean is antinomianism that we have no law.

Paul says we are under law we are under the law of Christ. When we get saved we have left one law and gone under another. We are either under the law or under the law of Christ.

The law that God gave to the Jews the Torah teaches about the fallen human condition. Unsaved people must sin. So the first born is under the law it's a slave to sin.

It's the son of a bondwoman. It is only the son of promise. The second born the one who is born of spirit who is free from the law free from the curse and if the son sets you free you shall be free indeed.

Look again more closely at Galatians chapter 4 What does Paul tell us in this particular passage? He tells us very clearly that the one who was born according to the flesh persecuted the one who was born according to the spirit. This is why unsaved people don't like Christians. But it is also why the old creation, the first born doesn't like the new creation the second born.

But let's go back to the very beginning of this conflict between the first born and the second. The beginning of course is the story of Cain and Abel. Come with me please back to the book of Genesis chapter 4. Genesis 4 Now the man had relations with his wife and she conceived and gave birth to Cain and she said I've gotten a man child with the help of the Lord.

Cain actually means gotten or the gotten one. Now the original Hebrew text does not say I have gotten a man child with the help of the Lord. It just says the text allows for the possibility that Eve could have believed that the child who she conceived was actually God himself.

She knew from Genesis chapter 3 that it would be the seed of the woman who would crush the serpent's head. I'm not saying that she did believe it. I'm simply saying the text allowed for the possibility that she believed the child was God.

But of course we know it wasn't. Hence the translators insert something not found in the original Hebrew text. They say with the help of the Lord.

And again she gave birth to his brother Abel. So you have the first born and the second. And Abel was the keeper of the flocks.

But Cain was the tiller of the ground. Notice that Cain did something that man did only before the fall. He did it before the fall.

Originally before the fall the text of Genesis would pretty well show that man was not carnivorous only herbivorous. The slaying of animals is something that only happened after the fall. Hence Cain did something that man did before the fall.

But Abel did something that man did only after he took care of animals that were going to be slaughtered. So it came about in verse 3 in the course of time that Cain bought an offering to the Lord of the food of the

ground. And Abel on his part also brought of the firstlings of the flock and of their fattened portions.

And the Lord had regard for Abel and for his offering. But for Cain and his offering he had no regard. So Cain became very angry in his countenance self.

Then the Lord said to Cain Why are you angry? Why has your countenance fallen? If you do well, will not your countenance be lifted up? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is for you but you must master it. And Cain told Abel his brother And it came about when they were in the field that Cain rose up against Abel his brother and killed him.

Then the Lord said to Cain Where is Abel your brother? And he said I do not know him I am my brother's keeper. I hear the voice of your brother crying from the ground. And the same kind of symbolic language and the same kind of literary properties of Genesis are replayed in the book of Revelation.

Genesis and Revelation fit each other like a glove. God declares the end from the beginning. Alpha and Omega Olive and Tove.

The martyrs cry out their blood cries out from under the altar in Revelation as Cain's brother Abel's blood cries out here. We see in the story of Joseph and his brothers with the woman and the stars and we see the same imagery in Revelation. We see the serpent in Genesis.

We see the serpent in Revelation etc. etc. The Bible is like a loaf of bread that hasn't been sliced yet.

It looks the same on both ends. So let's understand this story here of Cain and Abel. Once more the older hated the younger.

Cain is a corporate solidarity. He's again a picture of us. Cain's desire was for him and he had to overcome it.

Much the same as Cain's desire is for us and we must overcome it. But let's focus more closely. The older hates the younger.

Why? When Adam and Eve sinned God said you have to have animal skins. Sacrificed animals to cover your nakedness. Not fig leaves.

Fig leaves in the Bible are figures of good works. In the book of Revelation the fig leaves are for the healing of the nation. Fig leaves have their value but their value is not to bring salvation.

That's why Jesus cursed the fig tree. Israel had to work righteousness. There were leaves on the tree.

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And Abel on his part also brought of the firstlings of the flock and of their fat and portions. And the Lord had regard for Abel and for his offering. But for Cain and his offering he had no regard.

So Cain became very angry and his countenance fell. Then the Lord said to Cain, Why are you angry? Why has your countenance fallen? If you do well will not your countenance be lifted up? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is for you but you must master it.

And Cain told Abel his brother. And it came about when they were in the field that Cain rose up against Abel, his brother and killed him. Then the Lord said to Cain, Where is Abel your brother? And he said, I do not know him.

I am my brother's keeper. I hear the voice of your brother crying from the ground. And the same kind of symbolic language and the same kind of literary properties of Genesis are replayed in the book of Revelation.

Genesis and Revelation fit each other like a glove. God declares the end from the beginning. Alpha and Omega, Olive and Cove.

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We see the serpents in Genesis. We see the serpents in Revelation, etc. etc.

The Bible is like a loaf of bread that hasn't been sliced yet. It looks the same on both ends. But let's understand this story here of Cain and Abel.

Once more, the older hated the younger. Cain is a corpse of solidarity. He's again a picture of us.

Sin's desire was for him and he had to overcome it. Much the same as sin's desire is for us and we must overcome it. But let's focus more closely.

The older hates the younger. Why? When Adam and Eve sinned God said, you have to have animal skins, sacrifice animals to cover your nakedness. Not fig leaves.

Fig leaves in the Bible are figures of good works. In the book of Revelation the fig leaves are for the healing of the nations. Fig leaves have their value.

But their value is not to bring salvation. That's why Jesus cursed the fig tree. Israel had a work righteousness.

There were leaves on the tree, but no fruit. In other words, no fruit of the Spirit. There had to be a sacrifice.

Cain did not bring the sacrifice for sin that God ordained. Only Abel did. Thus the Lord was not able to accept Cain's sacrifice.

Now God did not hate Cain. God did not cast Cain out right away. God did not do anything other than try to encourage Cain.

But it was only Abel's sacrifice that was acceptable. So what did Cain do? In resentment he murdered his brother Abel. Why did the older kill the younger? Because God accepted the sacrifice of the younger.

Of Abel, not of Cain. The firstborn hates the second. The old creation hates the new one.

Why? It's obvious. Abel's name in Hebrew is Heaven. It means insignificant.

The firstborn, which Paul tells us corresponds to the old creation, hates the one who is secondborn, the new creation, the one who is born again. He sees it as insignificant. You're insignificant! And God's going to accept your worship? You're telling me my religion is not as good as yours? My worship is not as good as yours? No, it isn't.

Without the shedding of blood, there's no forgiveness of sins. Other faiths, other religions are not acceptable to the Lord. He demands the sacrifice.

The sacrifice of one without sin. And the only one who came without sin was his son, the Messiah, Jesus. To God, one man without sin is worth more than all the men with sin.

That is how Jesus could die for all. And that is why the Passover lamb had to be a lamb without spot or blemish. Only one without sin could be the atonement God would accept.

Innocent like a lamb. Nonetheless, let's look. So there it is with Cain and Abel.

The older hates the younger. The firstborn persecutes the second. The story then continues with Isaac and Ishmael.

As we read in Galatians, the one born of flesh hated the one born of promise. The one who is under the law of sin and death, which shows we are fallen, hates the one who was born of the Spirit. That's the conflict.

Then it continues with Cain and Abel. But it goes beyond Cain and Abel. It goes beyond Isaac and Ishmael.

It goes beyond Esau and Jacob. Turn with me, please, to Joseph and his brothers in Genesis chapter 38. We have an instance here of the sons of Tamar.

Joseph was received in Egypt, but meanwhile something was happening at home. You had two twins in her womb, similar to what you had with Esau and Jacob. In verse 28, moreover, it took place while she was giving birth, that one put out a hand, and the midwife took and tied a scarlet thread on his hand, saying, This one came out first.

Notice there would be conflict between the firstborn and the second once again, tying on the scarlet thread. This scarlet color, or reddish color, has to do with Isaiah 118. Now we'll come to this in just a moment.

In Genesis 37 verse 5, while this was going on, another conflict had happened between Joseph and his brothers in verse 5. Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers, they hated him even more. In this dream, his brothers were bowing down to him. The older would serve the younger, and his brothers hated him and betrayed him to the Egyptians.

In fact, they, as far as they knew, they were signing his death sentence. Why? His brothers hated him, because the older will serve the younger, and the older doesn't want to serve the younger. Cain hates Abel.

Ishmael, the one born of flesh, hated Isaac, the son of Parmas. So too, Esau, who defied his birthright, hates Jacob. And now, we see it happening that Joseph's older brothers hate him.

The firstborn, the older, is the old creation. The newborn, the secondborn, the younger, is the new creation, understood typologically from the viewpoint of Jewish midrash, as Paul communicates it to us by the Holy Spirit in Galatians chapter 4. Now let's understand this even further. Look with me, please, once again to the story in Genesis chapter 25.

Here we have it with Esau and Jacob. And we see five characteristics of the firstborn. Notice once more that he is born red.

Esau is born red. His name is then changed to Edom, red. And as we read along in Genesis, he settles in a land in southern Jordan where Petra is.

And that land is called Red, Edom. And in fact, if you were to go to the land of Edom or to look at it from the Red Sea at Israel, at a place like perhaps Ein Debi and look across the Dead Sea, you would see that the mountains in southern Jordan are red. So Esau is born red.

His name is changed to red. And he settles in a land that's red. And then he wants some red shoe.

The Hebrew word for red is Edom. Because the earth in the Middle East, if it is not sand, there is a reddish clay in it, it is called Adamah. The name for earth in Hebrew is Adamah.

And because the first man, Adam, was made from the earth, he's called Adam. Edom, Adamah, Adam. Red is the color of the natural man of the firstborn.

Adam. We know that in God's economy, we read about it in 1 Corinthians chapter 15, there is two Adams. In the first Adam all die, but in the second Adam all are made alive.

We read something similar in Ephesians. The second Adam being Jesus. The one who was born is of the first Adam.

The one who is born again, the second one, the second born, is born of Christ. Some anthropologists tell us that certain North American Indian tribes have an ancient tradition that the first man was a red man. They're probably right.

Adam. Edom. Adamah.

Red is the color of the natural man. He wants red stew. He lives in a red land.

His name is changed to red. Red goes to red. Red looks to red.

The flesh will always look to what is natural to it and behave like a natural man. Only the one who is born again of God's spirit will behave like a supernatural man. The second born.

Once more in Genesis 38. Here's the two twins and one of them puts his hand out. And the first one a red cord is tied on his hand but then the other comes out first.

The older and the younger in conflict even from the mother's womb. Now understand this. Jacob and Esau were brothers.

They were twins. They looked so much alike their own father could not tell the difference between them. He was elderly and getting blind.

The first born and second born can look so much alike. The old creation and the new creation can appear identical. When you're in the flesh and when you're in the spirit but in the mirror they look the same.

Very difficult to tell which is which. There's a first born in you and a second born in you. Just as there's a first and a second born in me.

And they look so much alike even our own parents can't always tell the difference. Sometimes we might not be able to tell the difference ourselves. Between the old creation and the new.

When we're walking in the spirit and when we aren't. But let's understand this even further. Red goes to red.

The flesh will always go to the things natural to it. Isaiah was warning King Hezekiah about this when people were trying to encourage King Hezekiah to go to Egypt for help. Israel was under a strategic threat from the Assyrians on one side and the Egyptians on another.

And King Hezekiah a good king, was being badly advised in chapter 31 of Isaiah to go to Egypt for help. To rely on horses and trust in chariots and in horsemen because they are strong but do not look to the Holy One of Israel. Red goes to red.

The flesh, the old creation, will always look to the things which the world considers to be strong. And so it is with Jacob and his brother Esau. His red brother says, give me some of that red stuff there.

Literally let me gulp it down. That is the first characteristic we see of the firstborn. The firstborn, the old creation, the natural man, the natural woman demands instant gratification.

We want it and we want it now. We see this demonstrated in the behavior of the prodigal son in Luke chapter 15. It was coming to him but he wanted it now instead of on his father's terms in his father's time.

This is what is happening in the church today because of the heretical people raised up teaching such things as word faith. What happens? We want it now. The firstborn demands instant gratification.

Let me gulp it down. Jesus said, store up treasures in heaven. Have mansions in heaven.

No, we want it now. This is the firstborn. This is carnality.

It is the old creation insisting on instant gratification just like Esau and like the prodigal son. This kind of carnality is what underlies kingdom now theology. Instead of it's right kingdom come, it's right kingdom has come and it's us.

We want the kingdom now. We want the prosperity now. This is a deception.

This is carnal Christianity. It is not the new creation. It is not the secondborn.

It is the firstborn wanting its own way and wanting it on its own terms and wanting it now. Like Esau the firstborn always insists on instant gratification. The second characteristic we see of Esau is they become susceptible to a swindler.

They became susceptible prone to being connived. I want it. I want it now.

You know, many churches and people are following cheap unbiblical formulas looking for revival. There are books written by people in America like C. Peter Wagner and Bill Hybels that basically say get the program right. Become seeker friendly and your church will grow.

But the facts show that this is basically a formula for at best something called transfer growth. When someone leaves church A for church B. Transfer growth doesn't work. Transfer growth never works.

Real growth is when people are born again and become ongoing disciples followers of Jesus. But today people are leaving one church for another and they're calling it blessing. This is absolutely absurd.

So they're going after fads and gimmicks to try to make the churches grow but they don't work. Just go to Toronto and get the blessing they say. Forget about the fact that the Bible says be sober in spirit.

Forget about the fact that the fruit of the spirit is self-control. Just go to Pensacola and we'll grow. Now that doesn't work.

The biggest church in England that propagated that idea was the Assemblies of God in Sunderland under Pastor Ken Goss. He acquired a big building and filled it up with all kinds of programs because God was moving in his lasting revival. His drunk in the spirit Rodney Howard Brown style revival.

Just get it now and we'll grow. The Assemblies of God magazine in England actually closed down their offices in Nottingham and relocated there to be part of the new move of God and move into this big building. Soon as the fad was over, the building closed down and the Assemblies of God magazine in England issued a statement saying God has led us back to Nottingham.

What? God didn't know the future? The whole building closed down. What's left of the big Toronto Assemblies of God in England and Ken Goss ministry? It's a group meeting in a small hotel called the

Roka. That's not growth.

That's not blessing. That's give me some of that red stuff there. Let me gulp it down.

We want it now. We want instant gratification. Just give me a quick formula to grow.

They don't want to persevere in prayer and fasting, evangelism, physical discipleship. They want a quick fix. They want to tickle people's ears and tell people what people want to hear, but those things never last.

In England there's something called an Alpha Course that comes from a church called Holy Trinity Brompton. The purpose of the Alpha Course, according to the people who write it, is to get people into the Holy Spirit weekend away in order to bring them into the Toronto experience. That's what its authors say.

Ricky Gumbel, Sandy Miller. This Alpha Course became very popular in England, but a poll was taken of 200 people who took the course. Of the 200 people who supposedly took the Alpha Course, only four of them could explain the gospel afterwards.

Explain the gospel in the sense that the New Testament teaches the gospel. Justification, salvation by grace, etc. Only four.

The others couldn't even explain it. Jesus never said to make converts, he said make disciples. We can question if these people were even saved, and if they were, they certainly weren't disciples.

The first biblical step of discipleship is baptism. But you'll find no believers' baptism in Alpha. Jesus never told us make converts, he said make disciples.

You know, there was a report on BBC television in England just recently that over the last year, from 1998 to the end of 1999, despite Alpha courses, church attendance in the Church of England, where Alpha comes from, declined by a further 36,000. Alpha just doesn't work. Give us instant gratification, said Esau.

We want it, we want it now. Get the latest program. Go to Pensacola, go to Toronto, go to anything, take an Alpha Course, make the churches grow.

Give us a quick fix solution to the declining Christianity of our nation. When you insist on instant gratification, you become susceptible to a swindler. You want a quick fix? You want instant gratification? You can always bet there'll be a Rodney Brown or somebody else coming along looking to give it to you, and taking up a real big offering.

Sometimes somebody will come along and even sell it to you. They become susceptible to being conned, connived, swindled. That's the second characteristic of the firstborn.

They become prone to being swindled. These money preachers on television are raking it in. And their own pastors, particularly in the black and colored community, the poor and unemployed, are joining naive white people in being sucked in and financially exploited.

But what was the third characteristic of the firstborn? I'm about to die! The firstborn, the old creation, doesn't know the difference between what it needs and what it wants. It doesn't know the difference between what it needs and what it wants. It exaggerates its essential needs.

We need this! I need this! We need this thing from Toronto or Pensacola! We need Alpha! We need the latest Gold Key! We need, we need, we need! It doesn't know what it needs from what it wants. This clouds its judgment and drives it further into the way of deception and exploitation. Why? Because the fourth characteristic is the values become distorted.

Esau asks, what good is a birthright to me? We stop valuing what God does. You despise your birthright. What is our birthright? We're told by the writer of Hebrews, don't despise your birthright.

You'll lose it like Esau did by selling it for a plate of red stew for a ticket to Toronto. What's the birthright? John chapter 1, verse 12. But to everyone who believes on his name, to these he gave the right to become the children of God.

Now understand about birthrights. Turn with me, please, to the book of Deuteronomy chapter 21. In verse 15 we read, If a man has two wives, the one loved and the other unloved, and both the loved and the unloved are born in sons, if the firstborn belongs to the unloved, it shall be in the day that he wills what he has to his sons.

He cannot make the son of the loved, the firstborn, before the son of the unloved, who is the firstborn. But he shall acknowledge the firstborn, the son of the unloved, by giving him a double portion of all he has. For he is the beginning of his strength that him belongs the right of the firstborn.

This is called Yerusha in Hebrew, inheritance. The firstborn had a double portion of the inheritance plus head of the family. Notice his parents could not take it away.

The law could not take it away. Nobody can take away a God-given birthright. Nobody could take away Esau's birthright.

His parents couldn't take it away. The law couldn't. But he sold it for a plate of stew.

We have a birthright from John 1 12. Nobody can take it. Nobody.

Not our parents. Not the church. Not the law.

No man can take it. And God won't take it. But what a tragedy it is when we despise it and sell it for a plate of red stew.

Again, a ticket to Pensacola or something else. It's most unfortunate. Esau despised his birthright and he couldn't get it back.

Even though he fought for it with tears, he couldn't get it because he found no place for repentance. In Great Britain, more mosques have been built than churches since the Toronto blessing. Since the Toronto experience alone, Mormonism has become the fastest growing quote-unquote Christian sect.

Everybody knows no revival came from Toronto that Rodney Howard Brown misled people. Everybody knows that in England. Islam had the revival.

Colts had the revival, but not the body of Christ. Everybody knows it. Neither will those churches who wait for this deception have the revival.

Why? Because they find no place for repentance. I know one pastor, God bless him, in Harare, who had the integrity to repent to the Lord for what he did and to confess it before his congregation and apologize that he fell for this deception and tried to bring his congregation into this lie and deception. And I point out that I myself, like him, am a Pentecostal.

What happens? God forgave him and blessed him, but he's the exception. Most of these people, having despised their birthright, will never ever, ever get it back because they find no place for repentance. I want to tell you a true story.

It is a tale of two churches. In New York City, David Wilkerson arrived in 1987. He began what was known as Times Square Church and a little auditorium on 43rd Street in Manhattan.

The crime in New York City in those days was astronomical. There was a murder every four to six hours. More than half of them unsolved.

Mainly crack cocaine dealers and heroin dealers assassinating each other with guns. Similar to what you have in Johannesburg and the cities of South Africa now. Unspeakable murder and violence.

Reckless rampage killing. Drive-by shooting. All kinds of things.

Pornography was all over the place. Transvestite prostitutes all over the place. Little children as young as 11 working as prostitutes to finance heroin and cocaine addiction.

There were 147 licensed sex shops in Midtown Manhattan alone. Most of the churches were small and dying. Very few Christians.

David Wilkerson came into this city in 1987. He's no longer in a little auditorium. He had to move to a movie theater.

Now he's in a big huge Broadway theater with a lot of other buildings around it. Something happened in that city. His church is packed out.

But he realized there was no quick fix solution. No alpha course. No church growth program.

No seeker friendly garbage. None of that was going to turn that city around. He emphasized prayer, fasting evangelism, discipleship and helping the poor.

Now if you go to Times Square Church if you get there on time you won't get a seat. In fact you won't get into the building if you get there on time. You have to queue up an hour early just to get inside and get a seat.

This is a big huge church. You think something like Raymond in Johannesburg is a big church? You haven't seen some of the churches in America. That's nothing.

That's small town. What else happened? Similarly in Jim Symbola's church, Brooklyn Tabernacle. Thousands and thousands and thousands of people.

Pentecostal. But against all the nonsense. What takes place? I taught a Bible study in the rescue mission of David Wilkerson's church called the Upper Room.

Every day there are prostitutes, drug addicts, homosexuals, pimps, junkies, saved in the Upper Room. There are people saved at every meeting in David Wilkerson's church. When you walk in the streets in the neighborhood, hairdressers, people who run book shops, they're all talking about this church.

Pay attention. Of the 147 licensed sex shops in Midtown Manhattan, almost all of them except for a couple have been closed down. The prostitutes are gone from the streets.

The drug dealers are gone from the streets. They began praying against the crime and fasting. Zero tolerance policies came into effect and the crime fell 40% in 3 years.

Now, the murder rate in New York City has fallen below 1964 levels. There is less murder in New York now than there was 35 years ago. Can you imagine that happening in Johannesburg? Or if it can happen in New York, it can happen anywhere.

There was no Alpha, no church growth, no quick fix. There was what the Bible says to do. Only when God began to work, it became the target of satanic attack.

The Stonewall movement, the militant homosexual movement, is based in New York. It's where it was born. Militant homosexuality and lesbianism.

It is very big, very militant, and very well financed. Tremendous amount of homosexual power and presence in the publishing industry, in the fashion industry, and in the theater industry. And they were determined to produce a play on Broadway of Jesus Christ and his homosexual lover.

To which David Wilkerson's church and other Christians objected. The homosexual community began to protest, saying, we're not going to be discriminated against by these homophobic bigots. Now remember, Times Square church, after it opened, things changed radically in Times Square and on Broadway.

Radically. Before he came, the pornography and drugs and prostitution and violence was squeezing the Broadway theater industry out of business. Now the place has had a renaissance.

But Satan attacked. So the homosexual community was determined to produce this play of Jesus and his homosexual lover on Broadway, practically around the corner from David Wilkerson's church. David Wilkerson had his people on the floor every day.

They were fasting and praying and weeping, Dear God, do not allow the name of your son to be disgraced in our city like this. That your judgment may not come upon us. You know, despite the power, the money, the size and the militancy of the homosexual community, that play never opens.

But now I'll tell you another story about another church, this one in London, England. Holy Trinity Brompton, which gave us the Alpha Course and introduced the Toronto Experience into England. And it is where the Toronto Experience was transferred to Pensacola, Florida when Steve Hill visited.

Militant homosexuals? No. Homosexual clergy, Anglican priests, dressed in clerical collars, were determined to have a gay and lesbian service in Southern Cathedral, where Christians were once martyred during the reign of Queen Mary after the Reformation and its aftermath. They were determined to put on front of national TV news this gay and lesbian service.

People were shocked. This was when the Toronto Experience and the Alpha Courses were at their peak. This were homosexual clergy.

Much the same as Bishop Desmond Tutu wanted to ordain lesbian priestesses into the Anglican community in South Africa at one point. Well, in Holy Trinity Bronx and home of the Alpha Course, its leaders, Sandy Miller and Nicky Gumbel, also had people on the floor. Only they weren't fasting and praying and weeping.

They were barking like dogs, laughing in hysterics and falling down in drunken-style antics, saying God was moving. Those homosexuals desecrated at Cathedral where Christians were once martyred, and Christ was once honored. You see, in a real move of God, in New York, they got the militant homosexual and lesbian community out of a theater.

In a false move of God in Holy Trinity Brompton, with the Alpha Courses in Toronto, they couldn't even get them out of a church. The whole thing is a stupid joke. When Rodney Howard Brown from South Africa attempted to come to New York, Pentecostal ministers, led by David Wilkerson and others, stood up and publicly opposed him.

They told people, take your books of Rodney Brown, Kenneth Copeland, Kenneth Hagin, and burn them. Pentecostal? Stop it. Ishmael persecuted Isaac.

Joseph's brothers hated him. Esau despised Jacob because he despised his own brother. So it is, friends, the older hates the younger.

The older persecutes the younger. Yet God says, the older must serve the younger. The firstborn must serve the one who is secondborn, that is, born again.

The older must serve the younger. If the older does not serve the younger, the older will kill the younger. My dear friends in Jesus, let us see to it that none of us despises his birthright.

This is Jacob Plath. God bless you and thank you.

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