

THE LIFE OF JACOB

By Titus Chu

MESSAGE FIVE: THE HEAVENLY PROVISIONS FOR THE DIVINE COURTSHIP (3)

The fourth heavenly provision for the divine courtsHIP is that the Lord gives us many opportunities for our development. Eventually how spiritual we can become, and how much we can mature, is based on whether we know how to develop ourselves.

Jacob was a descendant of Abraham, the father of height who typifies God the Father in the third heavens. Jacob had a divine source, the divine life, and a divine origin. Then he was born by Beer-lahai-roi, signifying the divine life supply. Jacob was born by a well of water that signifies the God who beholds us and unveils Himself to us. At Beer-lahai-roi Jacob enjoyed the life supply of the God who is always looking to give Himself to us for our enjoyment. He grew up in a place that was not so far from the good land, and not so far from the land of Egypt. He was close to the land that God considers His center on the earth, and he was close to the world that opposes God. This is also true of us, especially in America. We grow up between something of God and something of the world. Beer-lahai-roi is in the middle of these two different places.

Jacob was born to Isaac and Rebekah. This is the third divine provision: our parents for our protection. Isaac's name means "laughter," which implies something cheerful. Rebekah's name means "flatterer," which implies someone always trying to make us happy. The Lord gave us our parents for our protection. We may not consider our parents to be spiritual. They are not God. They are not Christ. Most of the time they are not even "overcoming." But this is actually God's wisdom.

Suppose our father is like Jesus, and our mother is like Mary (the one who sat at Jesus feet). Our dad is completely perfect and complete. He makes no mistakes, and has no problems or shortcomings. Then our mom is so spiritual, only loving the Lord all the time. Would we still pray to the Lord, or would we pray to our parents? Instead of praying to God we might pray to our dad, “Earthly father, hallowed be thy name. You are my comfort and my strength. I don’t need a Savior any more because I have such a good father.” For this reason God will never allow one person on the earth to be perfect or complete. Everyone has weaknesses and shortcomings. In the church life we may even try to make someone we care for “perfect,” but it is not possible. In the Old Testament, for example, the greatest person is David. He was a man after God’s own heart, and God used him the most. Yet he had such great weaknesses and caused so many problems. But David lived a life according to God’s desire despite all his weakness, and God honored his heart and used him. The reason we are not perfect is that it forces us to turn to the Lord.

THE FOURTH PROVISION: THE OPPORTUNITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT

God gives us many chances and opportunities for our development. This is the fourth heavenly provision for the divine courtship. We see this in the lives of Esau and Jacob. “And the first came forth red, all over like a hairy garment; and they called his name Esau” (Gen. 25:25). Esau was hairy all over, just like an animal. Then immediately after Esau, Jacob was born. “And after that his brother came forth, and his hand was holding on to Esau’s heel, so his name was called Jacob. And Isaac was sixty years old when she [Rebekah] bore them” (v. 26). In principle the hand of a new-born baby has no strength. It takes at least a few weeks for a baby to be able to grab and hold onto something. Yet at his birth Jacob was already so powerful. Esau was like an animal on the outside, but Jacob was an animal on the inside. Jacob had a certain kind of strength from the very beginning. The day Jacob was born he could use his hand to grab his brother’s heel. In a sense Rebekah gave birth to two animals.

One, Esau, was an outward animal; the other, Jacob, was an inward animal.

These two babies actually describe every human being. One baby, Esau, represents the flesh. The other, Jacob, represents the stubborn soul, the aggressive self. All Christians should have this realization. When the Lord looks at us, He sees two animals. He sees two parts of us which do not conform to the healthy condition of our spirit. Both of these “animals” are trying to overcome the other and be dominant. Even after being born of a divine source, and receiving the supply of the divine life, within everyone of us there are two animal natures.

Esau represents the flesh. The fleshly nature within us is not only apart from the divine nature, it is apart from the realm of human decency. “And when the boys grew up, Esau became a skillful hunter, a man of the field” (v. 27a). Esau was like an animal, living among and hunting the other animals, but he was also a cunning and skillful man. Our fleshly life is a life driven by impulse. When we live in our flesh something drives us that cannot be overcome. And this flesh is very cunning and skillful in getting what it wants. Our flesh is a terrible thing, an animal nature driven by impulse.

Jacob represents the self. The self is a different animal nature, one that is inward. It is not as ugly and obvious as the flesh. “But Jacob was a quiet man, dwelling in tents” (v. 27b). This means Jacob was like a typical 2nd-generation. He was a good kid in the church life. He was quiet, not causing problems and not making issues. Esau was a man of the field, and was skillful to hunt other animals. But Jacob was just a quiet man dwelling in tents. Within Jacob there was a very subtle self plotting for his interests.

In God's divine and heavenly provision He gives us life, He gives us a life supply, and He gives us protection. Then He gives us ample opportunities to grow. God even gives us the opportunity to live in our flesh and to live in our self. Both of these animals are with us, in our very nature. God allows us to find out who we really are apart from Himself.

Although the flesh and the self are animals, they struggle for the spiritual things. We see this in the struggle for the birthright. Esau was a cunning person, but Jacob was a plotting person. Plotting is deeper and more profound than being cunning. In our self life we often plan things. Sometimes brothers even come into the church life with an improper motive. They plan to be somebody important. The church life is an environment where we can develop. We can grow in life, and become mature and useful. This should be normal. Yet for some reason abnormality comes in. Either we become a cunning person like Esau, very skillful to hunt the other animals; or we become quiet person like Jacob, in a tent plotting in what way we can take over. All of us have these two natures. We have a cunning animal nature with a strong impulse that can't be controlled. The power of the flesh is beyond apprehension, and if the fulfillment of its impulse becomes habitual it can ruin a person's life. At the same time we also have a quiet animal nature that plots to carry out its selfish desire. Man is truly in a terrible condition.

Yet God is very interesting. He lets us develop from every angle. We would think God would look at Esau and say, "You're an animal. I'll just get rid of you. But I'll let Jacob grow and be transformed." But God doesn't do this. In our lives He gives us all the opportunities we need to grow and develop. He allows us to know that we have an Esau and a Jacob within us. We should even appreciate the fact that we have weaknesses and failures. This should cause us to thank the Lord that He has preserved us from damaging ourselves. We should pray, "Lord, thank You that I didn't become worse than I already am. Lord, I know that within me there is something very much like an animal. It is so bad that it deserves to die. But you didn't just get rid of me. You let me live so that I could grow. In the process of growth I have

so much weakness, but I'm thankful that in my weakness you have stopped me from going too far. I see Your guarding and keeping hand. Thank You for Your faithfulness.”

We were born at Beer-lahai-roi, between God (the good land) and the world (Egypt). We grow up both close to God and close to the world. God affects us, and the world also affects us. The animal nature within us would sometimes drive us to the world, yet God swallows it up. We live with an animal impulse towards so many things, but the Lord protects us and keeps us.

Which is Easier to Deal With? Esau is much easier to handle than Jacob. Esau lives by impulse, which is shallow, but Jacob is deeper and more subtle. He is a “decent” man. He is quiet and well-behaved, but he is plotting to get his way.

We have seen this in the church life. A person can come into the church life with the desire that everyone be under him. He can quietly sit in a tent and consider how to take advantage of this Christian group for his own success. In pursuing his selfish motive he can cause many to suffer. But we have to realize that we are the same. We all have Jacob within in us. He is more proper, cultured, and decent than Esau, but he is still an animal. He is more subtle in carrying out his selfish motive. The soulish life appears very decent, but we must be careful of it.

Both Esau and Jacob tried to be spiritual. We can be controlled either by a fleshly impulse or by selfish plotting, yet at the same time pretend that we live before God. When Esau and Jacob struggled for the birthright they were living like animals, yet trying to be spiritual. “Now Isaac loved Esau because he had a taste for game, but Rebekah loved Jacob” (v. 28). Actually this shows that Rebekah was more according to God than Isaac when she considered her sons. She knew that Jacob was the one God has chosen because of how God spoke to her, “The older shall serve the younger” (v. 23).

“And Jacob cooked a stew. And Esau came in from the field, and he was faint. And Esau said to Jacob, Let me swallow down some of the red stew, that red stew there, for I am faint. Therefore his name was called Edom. And Jacob said, First sell me your birthright” (vv. 29-31). Such a spiritual struggle for the birthright involves a big flesh and a deep soul. These two brothers argued over something of God, yet neither of them had God. God was only a God they have heard about.

In the church life a brother may see a leading one or an elder share a message or take care of the church, and he may think, “I want to be like that.” But he has no idea what’s involved. He has no idea of the price that must be paid to grow in life and become useful to the Lord. He doesn’t know how much is involved in becoming a person who can minister life or who can take care of the Lord’s testimony. Such a person desires to be spiritual, yet it is actually Esau and Jacob fighting within him.

Although Abraham gave birth to both Ishmael and Isaac, and then had more children later after he remarried, all of his riches went only to Isaac. It is possible that in struggling for the birthright Esau and Jacob were fighting for all the physical riches with which God had blessed their father. Yet they also knew of God and desired to be spiritual. Even in their mother’s womb they were fighting over who could be greater. Now the two were fighting over the birthright. One was cunning, and one was plotting. But the plotting one was deeper than the cunning one.

Jacob knew how to trap Esau and take the birthright. He knew that Esau was tired after hunting in the field, and desperate for something to eat. So Jacob waited for Esau to come, and said, “Sell me your birthright.” In Jacob’s eye the birthright included all the wealth of the father, and now he wanted to use one pot of soup to gain this wealth. But now we see how fleshly Esau really was. “And Esau said, I am now about to die, so of what use is this birthright to me?” (v. 32). He only wanted to satisfy his physical drive. He was so driven by his fleshly impulse that he

didn't even care about the birthright. His thought was, "I may as well satisfy my hunger and let things take care of themselves."

Esau was saturated with a fleshly impulse. He was so driven by the flesh that he had no logic. What he did makes no sense. This is the flesh - it ignores human logic. When a person lives in his flesh it means he has lost his logic and is controlled by his impulse. Esau said, "I am now about to die, so of what use is the birthright to me?" This exaggeration shows that he had lost his logic. All Esau needed to do was go a after coming back from the field was to go a little farther and he would have been home. Surely there was plenty of food waiting for him. To say that he was going to die is nonsensical. The flesh is like an animal completely controlled by impulse.

"And Jacob said, First swear to me. And he swore to him and sold his birthright to Jacob. And Jacob gave Esau bread and lentil stew, and he ate and drank and rose up and went away. Thus Esau despised his birthright" (vv. 33-34). Jacob was very happy because he got what he wanted. Yet after he cheated his brother out of all the wealth accumulated by Abraham and Isaac, did he eventually receive any of it? According to the Bible, Jacob never got all this wealth. Not one of the possessions of Abraham and Isaac went to Jacob, despite all his successful plotting. This should be a warning to us. Many times we try so hard with our clever, educated soul to pursue something spiritual. We may temporarily think we are successful, but in the end it will never work out. God will not honor the plotting of our self-life.

Eventually who received the inheritance? Esau. Who received the blessing? Jacob. All the physical inheritance went to Esau, and all the spiritual blessings went to Jacob. Our Christian life is very interesting. God gave us a birthright. But we either live by impulse, or we live by plotting. Neither of these is according to God. This means that we often have rough times, and sometimes even degraded times. As we grow, we often experience things that are not so good. But God is still God. From the beginning He said, "Two nations are coming out." Are we overcoming all

the time? No, but a nation is here. A servant of the Lord is here. Are we sometimes occupied by the impulse in our flesh? Yes. Are we at other times occupied by the selfish aspiration in our soul? Yes. But still within us there is a healthy spiritual desire that causes us to grow. God would say, “Your understanding is wrong, but I see rightly. Because you desire the birthright, I will bless you. But it is not what you think. You will not get what you planned. But you will have many more opportunities to grow. Because I will bless you, many more lessons are coming.”

We should pray, “Lord, thank You that in my life I have so many opportunities to develop. All the experiences I go through are for me to grow. I surely have a lot of failures for which I am ashamed, but even they are for my development. I also experience so much equipping, and it is all of my development. As You court me in the divine romance, You give me so many opportunities. Thank You that You didn’t make me a robot without any personality. You made me a human vessel. You made a person filled with logic, filled with affection, and filled with personality. You allow me to go through so many experiences for my development and for the fulfillment of Your purpose. In my life many things frustrate me, but these are chances for me to develop. When I fail I can take Your blood. When I am defeated I can take Your blood. Your blood cleanses me from all my sins, all my weaknesses, and all my shortcomings. Thank You that You desire to develop me so that I can be useful to You.”

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