

But Jacob said, "You know that Esau and I are not alike. His neck and arms are covered with hairs, while mine are smooth. My father will feel of me, and he will find that I am not Esau; and then, instead of giving me a blessing, I am afraid that he will curse me."

But Rebekah answered her son, "Never mind; you do as I have told you, and I will take care of you. If any harm comes it will come to me; so do not be afraid, but go and bring the meat."

Then Jacob went and brought a pair of little kids from the flocks, and from them his mother made a dish of food, so that it would be to the taste just as Isaac liked it. Then Rebekah found some of Esau's clothes, and dressed Jacob in them; and she placed on his neck and hands some of the skins of the kids, so that his neck and his hands would feel rough and hairy to the touch.

Then Jacob came into his father's tent, bringing the dinner, and speaking as much like Esau as he could, he said: "Here I am, my father."

And Isaac said, "Who are you, my son?"

And Jacob answered, "I am Esau, your oldest son; I have done as you bade me; now sit up and eat the dinner that I have made, and then give me your blessing as you promised me."

And Isaac said, "How is it that you found it so quickly?"

Jacob answered, "Because the Lord your God showed me where to go and gave me good success."

Isaac did not feel certain that it was his son Esau, and he said, "Come near and let me feel you, so that I may know that you are really my son Esau."

And Jacob told a lie to his father, and said, "I am." **(SEE PART II)**

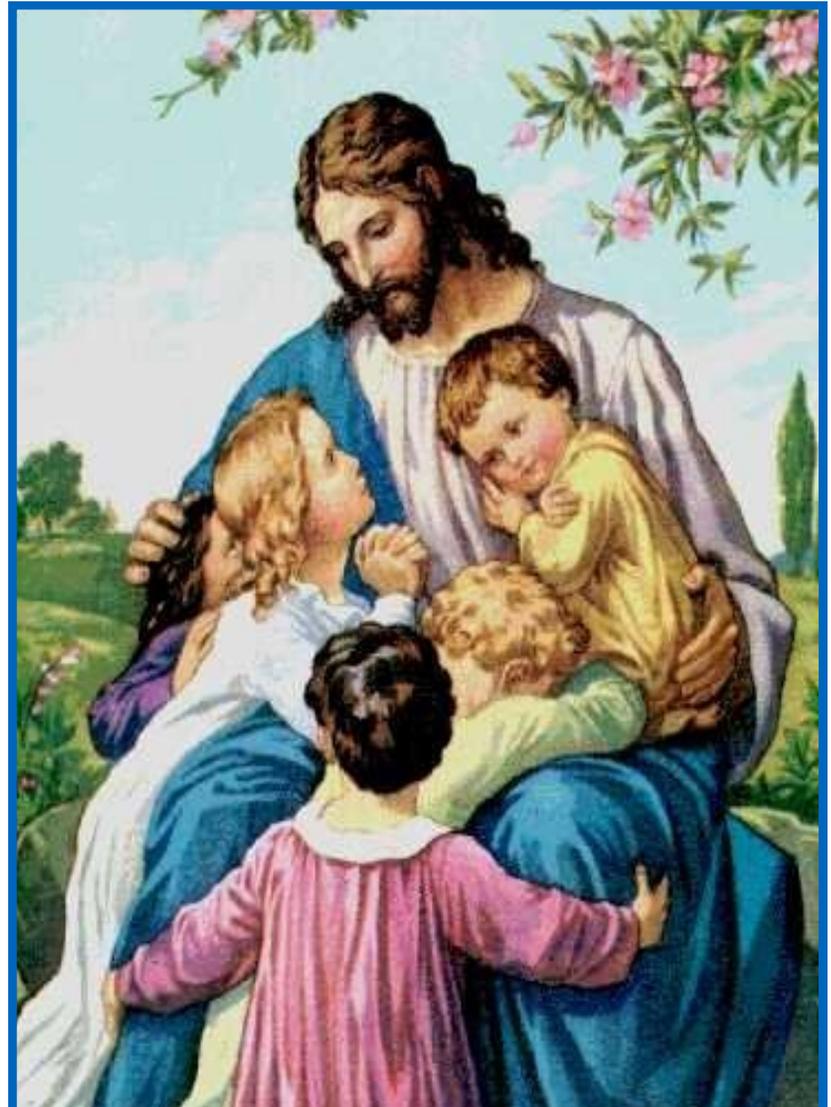
What did Isaac wish to give Esau?



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THE STORY OF JACOB

Part I

After Abraham died, his son Isaac lived in the land of Canaan. Like his father, Isaac had his home in a tent; around him were the tents of his people, and many flocks of sheep and herds of cattle feeding wherever they could find grass to eat and water to drink.

Isaac and his wife Rebekah had two children. The older was named Esau and the younger Jacob.

Esau was a man of the woods and very fond of hunting; and he was rough and covered with hair.

Jacob was quiet and thoughtful, staying at home, dwelling in a tent, and caring for the flocks of his father.

Isaac loved Esau more than Jacob, because Esau brought to his father that which he had killed in his hunting; but Rebekah liked Jacob, because she saw that he was wise and careful in his work.

Among the people in those lands, when a man dies, his older son receives twice as much as the younger of what the father has owned. This was called his "birthright", for it was his right as the oldest born. So Esau, as the older, had a "birthright" to more of Isaac's possessions than Jacob. And besides this, there was the privilege of the promise of God that the family of Isaac would receive great blessings.

Now Esau, when he grew up, did not care for his birthright or the blessing which God had promised. But Jacob, who was a wise man, wished greatly to have the birthright which would come to Esau when his father died. Once, when Esau came home, hungry and tired from hunting in the fields, he saw that Jacob had a bowl of something that he had just cooked for dinner. And Esau said: "Give me some of that red stuff in the dish. Will you not give me some? I am hungry."

And Jacob answered, "I will give it to you, if you will first of all sell to me your birthright."

And Esau said, "What is the use of the birthright to me now, when I am almost starving to death? You can have my birthright if you will give me something to eat."

Then Esau made Jacob a solemn promise to give to Jacob his birthright, all for a bowl of food. It was not right for Jacob to deal so selfishly with his brother; but it was very wrong in Esau to care so little for his birthright and God's blessing.

Some time after this, when Esau was forty years old, he married two wives. Though this would be very wicked in our times, it was not supposed to be wrong then; for even good men then had more than one wife. But Esau's two wives were women from the people of Canaan, who worshipped idols, and not the true God. And they taught their children also to pray to idols; so that those who came from Esau, the people who were his descendants, lost all knowledge of God, and became very wicked. But this was long after that time.

Isaac and Rebekah were very sorry to have their son Esau marry women who prayed to idols and not to God; but still Isaac loved his active son Esau more than his quiet son Jacob. But Rebekah loved Jacob more than Esau.

Isaac became at last very old and feeble, and so blind that he could see scarcely anything. One day he said to Esau: "My son, I am very old, and do not know how soon I must die. But before I die, I wish to give to you, as my older son, God's blessing upon you, and your children, and your descendants. Go out into the fields, and with your bow and arrows shoot some animal that is good for food, and make for me a dish of cooked meat such as you know I love; and after I have eaten it I will give you the blessing."

Now Esau ought to have told his father that the blessing did not belong to him, for he had sold it to his brother Jacob. But he did not tell his father. He went out into the fields hunting, to find the kind of meat which his father liked the most.

Now Rebekah was listening, and heard all that Isaac had said to Esau. She knew that it would be better for Jacob to have the blessing than for Esau; and she loved Jacob more than Esau. So she called to Jacob and told him what Isaac had said to Esau, and she said: "Now, my son, do what I tell you, and you will get the blessing instead of your brother. Go to the flocks and bring to me two little kids from the goats, and I will cook them just like the meat which Esau cooks for your father. And you will bring it to your father, and he will think that you are Esau, and will give you the blessing; and it really belongs to you."