

Isaac: The Passive Patriarch: The Final Reunion

Goldstone Church – 23-Mar-25 10:30am

Genesis 35:27-29

Introduction

Overall, the life of Isaac was rather dull and boring. It is easy to focus on the people around Isaac rather than look at what he did. Compared to other people in the Bible, Isaac was ordinary. His life demonstrates God's faithfulness to His promises. God can still move in the lives of ordinary people.

The Book of Genesis can be divided into three sections:

- Genesis 1-11 – from Creation to the Tower of Babel.
- Genesis 12-36 – The Three Patriarchs.
- Genesis 37-50 – Joseph and the Sons of Jacob.

In a manner consistent with Isaac's average character, we are told about the end of Isaac's life (Genesis 35:27-29). These events are significant in God's plan.

1. GOD'S STRENGTH (Genesis 35:27)

"So Jacob returned to his father, Isaac, in Mamre, which is near Kiriath-arba (now called Hebron), where Abraham and Isaac had both lived as foreigners." (Genesis 35:27 NLT).

In the Bible, the names of people often hold a great significance. Parents often chose names for their children that related to the birth of the child. For example, when Rebekah gave birth to twin sons, the firstborn was a hairy child, so they called him Esau, meaning "hairy". The second child came out clinging to his brother's heel, so they called him Jacob, meaning "heel holder" or replacement (Genesis 25:25-26).

Geographically, Mamre and Hebron (Genesis 35:27) are close together, located in the Hills of Judah, about 20 miles south of Jerusalem. This would have been a safe and pleasant place to live, with good grazing areas for flocks. Significantly, the names of Mamre and Hebron have spiritual implications.

➤ Mamre means "strength" and fullness.

"The Lord appeared to Abraham near the great trees of Mamre while he was sitting at the entrance to his tent in the heat of the day." (Genesis 18:1).

The strength that Isaac found in the name of Mamre was the strength and the power of God.

➤ Hebron means "association" and relationship.

"So Abram went to live near the great trees of Mamre at Hebron, where he pitched his tents. There he built an altar to the Lord." (Genesis 13:18).

The association that Isaac found in the name Hebron was through a worshipping relationship with God.

Like Abraham, Isaac had physically lived in Mamre and Hebron. Spiritually, Isaac deliberately put himself in a place to worship God. Isaac's spiritual strength came from God, and he constantly expressed a personal love-relationship with God.

As Christians, are we putting ourselves in a place to worship God? Do our daily lives express an ongoing love-relationship with God? Are we drawing our strength from God?



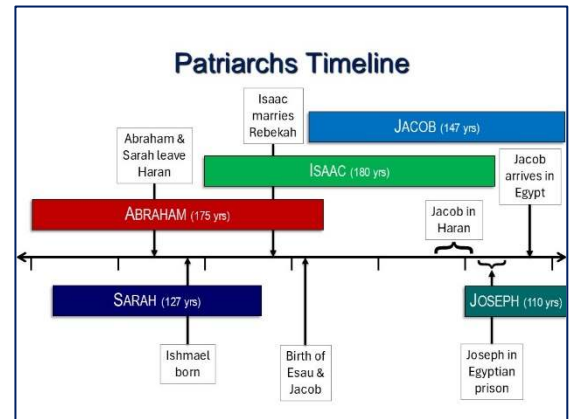
2. GOD'S TIMING

(Genesis 35:28)

"Isaac lived for a hundred and eighty years." (Genesis 35:28 NLT).

Most Bible commentators suggest that Moses wrote the book of Genesis. Whoever it was, the writing style is a wonderful blend of historical facts, colourful storytelling, and a brief poem here and there. The problem with this style of writing is that the overall timeline of events can be unclear.

The summarised Timeline for the Patriarchs (see diagram) shows the full impact of Isaac's life on the family tree. Isaac lived the longest of all the Patriarchs. Although he didn't leave the country, Isaac provided a stability and a constancy to God's people.



Even though Isaac was very old, probably blind and frail, there is every suggestion that Isaac would have met all his grandchildren. The Bible is silent about this time in Isaac's life, but he may have told his grandchildren about his father Abraham. How God had made a personal Covenant with him and with all of Abraham's descendants.

After Jacob and his family returned, Isaac lived for another 15 years. But Isaac was old, blind, and possibly alone. (The Bible doesn't say when Rebekah died, but probably when Jacob was away.)

Q. Why did God keep Isaac, an ageing widower, alive for so long? What contribution could he expect to make to the ongoing growth and development of the family?

Sadly, we don't have an answer – but it was clearly God's sovereign plan for Isaac's life.

The Bible speaks of the hope that old people can have in God, e.g.,

"I will be your God throughout your lifetime – until your hair is white with age. I made you, and I will care for you. I will carry you along and save you." (Isaiah 46:4 NLT).

"With long life I will satisfy him and show him my salvation." (Psalm 91:16 ESV).

"Therefore we do not become discouraged [spiritless, disappointed, or afraid]. Though our outer self is [progressively] wasting away, yet our inner self is being [progressively] renewed day by day."

(2 Corinthians 4:16 AMP).

As His people, God is calling us live out our daily lives in a way that honours Him.

3. GOD'S PROMISE

(Genesis 35:29)

"And Isaac breathed his last, and he died and was gathered to his people, old and full of days. And his sons Esau and Jacob buried him." (Genesis 35:29 ESV).

Little is recorded about the death of Isaac. Unlike other Bible characters, there are no final words, no final blessing, or a record of a funeral procession. Consistent with his almost anonymous life, the Bible simply says, *"Isaac breathed his last"*.

Nevertheless, there are details of where Esau and Jacob buried Isaac.

"Soon I will die and join my ancestors. Bury me with my father and grandfather in the cave in the field of Ephron the Hittite. This is the cave in the field of Machpelah, near Mamre in Canaan, that Abraham bought from Ephron the Hittite as a permanent burial site. There Abraham and his wife Sarah are buried. There Isaac and his wife, Rebekah, are buried. And there I buried Leah." (Genesis 49:29-31 NLT).

After all their differences, Esau and Jacob honoured their father together. They buried Isaac

in the same cave where Isaac had previously buried his father, Abraham. This was the only plot of land in Israel that was owned by Abraham and his descendants.

As the twins buried their father, did they see the cave as the Promise of a Place that they would have for themselves one day?

In the New Testament, Jesus spoke about a place that has been promised to each one of us.

“Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. My Father’s house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back, and take you to be with me, that you also may be where I am.” (John 14:1-3).

Jesus promises us a new place He is preparing for us. A home for all who are willing to trust in Him. Jesus came to earth to remove the sin in our lives and to reinstate us to the perfection that God wanted us to be in the first place. Jesus came to bring forgiveness.

Having been made right with God through Jesus, we are then eligible to come into God’s holy presence and enjoy our new home in heaven. This is God’s gift of eternal life that He offers to each one of us. By believing on what Jesus has done on the cross, our sins are forgiven, and we are made new.

“For we are God’s masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.” (Ephesians 2:10 NLT).

“And this is what he promised us – eternal life.” (1 John 2:25).

This is God’s promise to us today – and He always keeps His promises.

CONCLUSION

As we come to the end of this series looking at the life of Isaac, let us consider his life afresh.

- Isaac visibly showed **God’s Strength** to those around him, by the way He worshipped God, and the way he followed God wholeheartedly. May we do the same.
- Isaac accepted **God’s Timing** for his life, and lived out the practicalities of his life, in a way that honoured God. May we do the same.
- Isaac received **God’s Promise** of an eternal blessing. The assurance of spending eternity in God’s holy presence. Through Jesus, may we have the same assurance today.

Amen