

## **The Faith of The Patriarchs**

### **Hebrews 11:20-22**

#### **Introduction**

Chapter 11 begins with an explanation of faith (vv.1-2) and continues with examples of faith (vv. 4-5; 7-40). Why is faith necessary (vv.3;6)? Without faith it is impossible to please God or receive God's approval (v.6). By faith we believe the promises of God and the power of God to make good those promises (v.6). Our examples of faith have included a journey through the book of the book of Genesis with Abel (v.4); Enoch (v.5); Noah (v.7); Abraham (vv.8-9;12; 17-18) and Sarah (v.11). Now in brief we look at Isaac (v.20); Jacob (v.21) and Joseph (v.22). It would appear faith can be passed on and believed by our children and grandchildren and their children. Isaac believed the Word passed from Abraham and conferred the blessing on Jacob. The story is found in Genesis 27. Jacob—begins in failure and still in faith in God's Word describes his families future; including the blessings of Judah; Ephraim and Manasseh before he dies (Genesis 48). Joseph believed that God would one day deliver Israel from Egypt; because that is what God promised Abraham (Genesis 15:13-16). How in the world do we explain Joseph having any faith at all when we consider the fact that his own brothers almost had him killed—was a victim of human trafficking—unjustly accused of rape and served time in prison. Combine that with spending most of your life in a pagan culture and then rising to the peak of power and still retain both faith in God personal integrity!

Like the Hebrews most of you know these stories by heart. But have you taken the stories to heart? Have you allowed them to enrich your faith and establish your faith and encourage your faith? Does your faith include counting on the promises of God and the purposes of God in your life? What do you see in your future? Blessing? Fulfillment?

We look at three generations of faith; Isaac, Jacob and Joseph.

#### **The Future Of Faith (v.20)**

*Hebrews 11:20 (NKJV) 20 By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come.*

Isaac was given a glimpse into the future.

The Lord told both Isaac and Rebekah that Jacob was to receive the blessing; the older son would serve the younger son.

(Genesis 25:23); And the Lord said to her: "Two nations are in your womb, Two peoples shall be separated from your body; One people shall be stronger than the other, And the older shall serve the younger".

The struggle in Rebekah's womb—was a prophetic picture of the struggle between the descendants of Esau (the Edomites) and the descendants of Jacob (the Israelites). The Lord

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promised and prophesied that the younger would occupy the place of preeminence normally assigned to the elder.

We find the story in Genesis 27.

Isaac has been called the mediocre son of a great man—and the mediocre father of a great son. But that is probably neither charitable nor fair. The Bible pictures Isaac in five places; on a mountain, by a field, alongside some desert wells, and in a Philistine apartment and at a supper table. We are introduced to him as a submissive son being used as a burnt offering. We then find him as a gentle groom—in his mother’s tent. He is given the promise by God concerning his wife’s pregnancy. He and Ismael bury their father. Isaac repeats the sin of his father and in the time of famine—forsakes the promised land (Canaan) and moves into the area of the Philistines. He lies to King Abimelech concerning Rebekah his wife—and identifies her as his sister. Once again Abimelech discovers the truth and embarrassed Isaac about his deceit. We see Isaac blessed by God and plagued by compromise.

The Bible does not always paint the heroes of faith in the best possible light. A divided home often leads to carnal divisions. Isaac is about 137 years old—but acts like he could die at any moment (he will live to be 180! see chapter 35:28). Some Bible teachers and scholars have interpreted his impatience in imparting the blessing to Esau as proof that Isaac was following his own carnal plans and not God’s will. Did Isaac forget the promise (Genesis 25:23)? In the story much emphasis is placed on the senses; feeling, eating, smelling (and blindness!) Feelings took precedence over faith and God’s promises. Feeding the body became more important than fulfilling God’s will! What a change! Isaac in his younger days willingly allowed himself to be laid on an altar—he was literally willing to die for the Lord! How had it come to this? Clearly Rebekah had been told by God that the younger son would inherit the blessing and provide the seed—but instead of praying and waiting for God’s will to unfold—she took matters into her own hands. She would pay dearly for her sin; she would never see her son again (see chapters 43-45). Esau deliberately acted to hurt his mother and her sinful example would send Jacob on a 25 year old trial. Jacob participates in the deception. And later in chapter 12:7 of this book of Hebrews we see Esau seeking the blessing with tears—but finds no real place of repentance. He was sorry for what he lost—but he was not sorry for what he had done!

In the passage (chapter 27:33) Isaac trembles when he realizes that God has overruled his plans. Esau’s tears could not change Isaac’s mind or altar God’s plan or blessing.

Why didn’t Isaac reverse the blessing when he discovered that he had been deceived by Jacob?

Isaac preferred Esau. Isaac wanted to pass the blessing on to his son Esau. At first Isaac was reluctant to obey God—he planned to ignore God’s will and bless Esau.

We often cite Jacob’s deceit in cheating his brother out of his birth right. But we sometimes fail to recall the promise given in Genesis 25:23.

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In the end Isaac submitted to God's will and God's plan.

Sin the home always brings heartache—separation. Esau will plot to murder his brother. Everyone suffered because of unbelief and disobedience. Rebekah sends Jacob away under the pretense to find a bride—but in her mother's heart she fears Esau's anger.

The writer of Hebrews interprets the incident “by faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come—the future.

What exactly did Isaac believe? Isaac believed in a promised seed and a promised land. Isaac lived his life in faith and died in faith. In the end Isaac repented, believed God's promise and did God's will.

In the end the promised Messiah would come through Jacob. Two sons—two kings—one King Jesus (through Jacob)—the other King Herod (through Esau).

### **The Blessing Of Faith (v.21)**

*21 By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, and worshiped, leaning on the top of his staff.*

The story is found in Genesis 48:1-6; 13-16.

There are several important points; the event takes place when Jacob is dying. Jacob blesses both sons of Joseph. Jacob blesses the sons of Joseph—reminding them their place is in the promised land and their portion in the promised seed—until the very end. Think for a moment; the sons of Joseph were born in Egypt—but their future lay elsewhere. Jacob worshiped while dying (leaning on the top of his staff). The idea of leaning on the staff is a picture of frailty, weakness, dependence. But what does Jacob do? He continues to rise—and worship God to the very end of his life. He worships God and believes in the promised land and the promised seed to the very end!

Jacob will spend the last 17 of his 147 years in Egypt. Jacob enjoys his favorite son—the first 17 years (he is taken prisoner and kidnapped at 17) of Joseph's life—and the last 17 years of his own life. How odd! Jacob calls Joseph to his bed (47:31)—in order to bless Joseph's two sons. The two boys are probably in their early 20's—and Jacob claims them as his own—and grants to them the status of his immediate sons Reuben and Simeon. Later in Genesis Simeon and Levi will in effect disappear as separate tribes so that Ephraim and Manasseh can take their places. Knowing that Manasseh is the oldest Joseph puts his firstborn—at Jacob's right hand and Ephraim at the left. Jacob crosses his hands—and this displeased Joseph. But Jacob was guided by God—for God was going to give the greater blessing to Ephraim. Warren Wiersbe speaks of this as the divine principle of setting aside the first in order to bless the second (Hebrews 10:9).

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#### **By faith Jacob crossed his hands.**

It occurred in Seth and Cain; Isaac and Ishmael; Jacob and Esau—and of course—do we dare ignore the obvious—Jacob’s arms form a cross—and in the cross calvary—one nature is set aside and the new nature—the spiritual nature established. “When you are born again, God rearranges your spiritual birth order” (see p.80 of Old Testament Outlines).

In the end Jacob’s blessings reveal both the character of his children and the destiny of his children. Your character will play a great role in your future. Reuben was the firstborn and should have inherited great glory and honor—but his sin—cost him blessing. Judah was identified with the lion—the king of beasts—and out of Judah the lawgiver (Christ) would come and would be the rightful king of Israel. 48:10—predicts that Shiloh—the one who gives rest—Jesus—would not come—until Judah—lost his rule and that was certainly true when Jesus was born. Joseph’s blessing is the longest—he is a fruitful bought—attacked by his brothers—but victorious in the end. Jacob pronounces material and spiritual blessings—because Joseph is—in the end—the prince among his brethren. Joseph suffers most—and yet receives great blessings.

Jacob in life—proud, strong, self-sufficient—in the end—dying—blessing—worshipping—leaning! It took years—but Jacob is broken and becomes Israel.

Jacob dies—not in the land—but away from the land. Remember—he and his family were forced from the land and driven into Egypt because of the global famine.

#### **The Fulfillment Of Faith (v.22)**

*22By faith Joseph, when he was dying, made mention of the departure of the children of Israel, and gave instructions concerning his bones.*

Joseph by faith peers into the future and sees the fulfillment of faith. He sees past the time—when the leaders of Egypt will forget him—past the centuries of slavery and sees a glorious departure of the children of Israel.

Joseph “gave instructions concerning his bones” (remains). Paul spoke of Christians as members of Christ’s body—his flesh and bones (Eph.5:30). In Psalm 34 we read; “Many are the afflictions of the righteous: But Jehovah delivers him out of them all. He keeps all his bones: not one of them is broken” (vv.19-20). Scholars have long known this is a Messianic Psalm quoted in John’s gospel 19:31-36; “ a bone of Him shall not be broken.”

The story of Joseph is one of the great stories in the Bible. We could make the case that Joseph’s faith is a crown jewel in the diadem worn by our Savior the Lord Jesus Christ. Joseph believed in the promises of God despite the most severe circumstances. Joseph remains faithful when most abandon faith. If anyone could make a case for abandoning the faith of his fathers it is Joseph.

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Talk about a bad experience with the family of God!

But Joseph the favored son—the faithful steward and forgotten servant will become the forgiving saint and a fruitful shade tree.

The story of Joseph begins in Genesis 37 where we see Joseph as a favored son of his father Jacob. The story begins with Joseph's dreams and continues with Judah's schemes—we are not told which brother came up with the idea of doing away with Joseph. Was it Simeon—threatened by the rights and privileges usually granted to the first born (which would be eventually taken away from Reuben (see Genesis 49:3-4). The Bible describes Simeon as crafty and cruel (Gen.42:24). Joseph would exercise more harshness with Simeon than with the others. The picture in the Bible of Joseph is that of a faithful steward (chapters 38-39); where he learns the discipline of service and the discipline of self control; and the discipline of suffering. In Genesis 40 Joseph is the forgotten servant and in Genesis 40-45 we see Joseph elevated to the place of authority and majesty. In the end Joseph will save his father, his family and his people. God had a purpose for all of Joseph's trials. When Joseph finally reveals himself to his family he promises to nourish them and protect them, he weeps over them and kisses them and sends for his father. The last chapters of Genesis close with Jacob's last journey, blessing, and request.

Why in the world did both Jacob and Joseph wish to be buried in the land of Canaan, the promised land? Because Egypt (the world) was never their home. This place was never our home. Our spirits return to Jesus when we die. Our bodies will be resurrected from their places here on the earth.

Joseph never lost his faith in the promises of God. Joseph believed his children would benefit from the chosen seed—and that his children would settle in the promised land. Joseph was dying in a foreign land but believed the impossible—that both his remains and his children would one day settle in the land of promise. Joseph's faith was an undying faith—his body was dying—but not his faith in God—and in God's promises. He knew that he would one day rest in God's promised land.

Joseph's brothers did not really believe Joseph's testimony—what they meant for evil—God meant for good. Their weeping and fear revealed their unbelief. In their blindness the brothers wanted to earn their brother Joseph's forgiveness. Genesis begins with a garden and ends with a grave. The Bible ends with a description of a beautiful garden city (Rev.21-22) and the eternal state—a relationship with Jesus forever and ever (see Wiersbe's Outlines of the Old Testament; pp.81-82).

Many Bible teachers have pointed out the types and shadows of Jesus found in Joseph. Both are beloved by their fathers. Both refer to themselves as shepherds. Both are sent by their fathers to their brethren. Both are hated by their brothers for no good reason. Both are plotted against; severely tempted; taken to Egypt; stripped of their robes; sold as a slave; bound and imprisoned. Both are falsely accused; experience God's presence through the trial; respected by jailers;

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placed with two prisoners—one lost and one saved. Both begin their ministry at about the age of 30; and both are highly exalted after extreme suffering. Both take non Jewish brides—and both are lost to the brothers—at least for a little while! Both forgive and restore their repentant brothers and both—are visited and honored by all the earthly nations!

God cared for them—down to the bone!

### Conclusion

A faith that fails to see Jesus as the promised seed will always fall short.

The Jewish reader would have recognized that God’s dealings with Isaac and Jacob and Joseph were all a part of the divine plan. The predictions of the future fulfilled.

What do Isaac, Jacob and Joseph have in common? They have knowledge of God passed down to them from Abraham. They receive a prophetic vision. They have a clear choice. Believe God. Believe His promises. Obey His voice. Isaac and Jacob and Joseph—are given choices—and they each exercise faith—faith in God’s Word! By faith—Isaac accepts Jacob as God’s choice—by faith Jacob—claims Ephraim and Manasseh as his own children and by faith Joseph sees Israel leave Egypt—forever! Each saw God’s mind for the future—and said—let this be so. Each had the confidence of things hoped for—the conviction of facts not yet seen!

In the end Isaac knew that in spite of his weakness and favor towards the elder son—God had a different plan and a different future. The older will serve the younger. Much of the Bible is devoted to Jacob’s failure—but in the end Jacob will worship and serve the Lord and bless his children and remind them of God’s future. Faith allowed Joseph to see the Exodus—of his family as if it was already accomplished. This is why Joseph could instruct his family to take his bones and bury them in Canaan. William Lincoln writes; “Thus, while surrounded by Egypt’s pomp and splendor, his heart was not there at all, but with his people in their future glory and blessing.”

No wonder the writer of Hebrews invites the readers to a deeper appreciation of faith.

By faith	Abel offers an acceptable sacrifice.
By faith	Enoch pleases God and is taken avoiding death.
By faith	Noah builds an ark and rescues his family.
By faith	Abraham follows God, believes God’s promises for a son, and offers that son as a sacrifice.
By faith	Isaac blesses his sons future
By faith	Jacob blesses Joseph’s sons
By faith	Joseph speaks prophetically of a future where they are able to leave Egypt and live a the land promised by God.