

Old Testament Literature

Genesis: Abraham, Akedah, Jacob & Esau

Author: Dr. Ted Hildebrandt | **Session 9**

Sponsored by Biblecallelearning.org by Ted Hildebrandt

Keywords

Akedah, Abraham, Sarah, Sodom, Lot, Hospitality, Isaac, Jacob, Esau, Predestination

Abstract

This lecture by Dr. Ted Hildebrandt examines major Genesis narratives covering Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Esau. It explores ancient Near Eastern customs surrounding desert hospitality and wife-sister deceptions, alongside theological reflections on divine-human interaction and anthropopathic language. A central focus is placed on the Akedah (the binding of Isaac) as an archetype of pure faith and divine sacrifice, followed by an analysis of divine election, predestination, and family conflict in the Jacob-Esau cycle.

Outline

I. Lecture Preview and Administrative Notes

- A. Upcoming readings in select chapters of Numbers
- B. Memory verses and upcoming exam preparation

II. Abraham and Sarah's Deception ("She's My Sister")

- A. Abraham's deception in Genesis 12 (Pharaoh) and Genesis 20 (Abimelech)
- B. Cultural context of ancient Near Eastern female protection and sister-adoption
- C. God's providential intervention to protect Sarah and the lineage of Isaac

III. The Angelic Visit and Desert Laws of Hospitality

- A. Three visitors at the trees of Mamre (Genesis 18)
- B. Sacred obligation of desert hospitality in Bedouin culture
- C. Modern parallels of hospitality and sanctuary (Pashtun custom and Navy SEAL case study)

IV. Intercession for Sodom and Gomorrah: Bartering with God

- A. God's disclosure to Abraham regarding Sodom and Lot
- B. Cultural practice of bartering applied to prayer and divine-human interaction
- C. Theological implications: legitimate human-divine interaction and God allowing human impact

V. Anthropomorphic and Anthropopathic Theological Language

- A. Anthropomorphic language: describing God with human physical forms (eyes, hands)
- B. Anthropopathic language: describing God with human emotions (grief, anger, love)

- C. Reality of divine emotion and human capability to affect God

VI. The Destruction of Sodom and Moral Judgments

- A. Arrival of angels in Sodom and Lot's insistence on hospitality (Genesis 19)
- B. Violation of hospitality laws and homosexual assault in Sodom
- C. Biblical stance on homosexual acts across Old and New Testament passages
- D. Pastoral reflection: balancing opposition to sin with Christlike love for individuals

VII. The Akedah: The Binding of Isaac (Genesis 22)

- A. Transition from God as Promiser to God as Tester
- B. Narrative economy and the reader's role in supplying emotional depth
- C. Isaac's question ("Where is the lamb?") and Abraham's prophetic response
- D. Spatial doubling: Mount Moriah as the future site of Jerusalem and the Crucifixion
- E. Kierkegaardian perspective: Fear and Trembling and personal reflections on sacrifice

VIII. Stages of Faith Development

- A. Easy Faith: receiving salvation and blessings from God
- B. Faith of Resignation: surrendering temporal ambitions and devaluing what is lost
- C. Unreasonable Pure Faith: surrendering "the precious" (the single most valued entity) to God

IX. Jacob and Esau: Strife and Deception

- A. Etymology and thematic significance of names (Jacob as "deceiver/heel-grabber", Israel as "struggles with God")
- B. Struggle in Rebekah's womb and divine selection of the younger brother
- C. Predestination versus free will: divine covenant choice and human moral responsibility
- D. Esau (Edom/Seir - "Big Red" / "Hairy") and the trading of the birthright for red stew
- E. Deception of blind Isaac, parental favoritism, and the significance of the paternal blessing