

Ask Away – January 23

1) What was the difference between the birthright and the blessing? (Gen 27:36)

The birthright was concerned with the inheritance of property and possessions (Deut 21:17). The blessing was concerned with future prosperity, social standing, and power (Gen 27:28–29). Esau sold his double portion of the inheritance to Jacob for a single bowl of soup, but he still hoped to gain the blessing of future wealth and success (Gen 27:34, 38). When Rebekah overheard Isaac's plan, she immediately took action to prevent Esau, whose wives had made her life bitter, from gaining any kind of preeminence or supremacy in the future.

While anyone could pronounce a blessing on their children, the blessings of the patriarchs carried special significance because they were the chosen people of God, and at certain times, they spoke with God's authority and sanction (cf. Gen 25:5; 28:3–4; 48:14–20; 49:1–28). Indeed, God explicitly said that Abraham was a prophet (Gen 20:7), and Jacob's prophecy of his sons' future was inspired by the Holy Spirit (Gen 49:1–28). Thus Isaac's parting blessing of Jacob conferred far more than the prospect of future material success (Gen 28:3–4). It also conferred the promised blessings of God—the establishment of a nation, a vast number of descendants, the inheritance of Canaan, power and preeminence in the land, protection from enemies, and the spiritual blessing of the entire world through the Messiah (Gen 12:1–3; 15:1–21; 22:18).