"God's Sovereign Selection of Isaac and Jacob"

Genesis 25:1-23

11/22/98

Introduction:

***The Almighty God of the universe perfectly knows the future and in wisdom plans the future because He is in sovereign control over all things.**

God's sovereignty is revealed in Genesis 25 as He selected one son to be favored over another.

I. God sovereignly selects Isaac to be the heir of the Abrahamic estate over Ishmael and the sons of Keturah (vv. 1-18)

II. God sovereignly selects Jacob to be the heir over Esau (vv. 19-23)

SEE: Romans 9:6ff
The theological implications of God's selection of Isaac and Jacob:

Conclusion:

The practical implications of the Sovereignty of God:

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Introduction:

Since God is omniscient (He knows all things) and since God is omnipotent (He has power over all things), He can declare the future with perfect, pin-point accuracy.

Isaiah 41:4
Who hath wrought and done it, calling the generations from the beginning? I the Lord, the first, and with the last; I am he.

Isaiah 46:9-10
Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, [10] Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure:

Isaiah 48:3, 5a
I have declared the former things from the beginning; and they went forth out of my mouth, and I shewed them; I did them suddenly, and they came to pass. [5] I have even from the beginning declared it to thee; before it came to pass I shewed it thee:

***The Almighty God of the universe perfectly knows the future and in wisdom plans the future because He is in sovereign control over all things.**

God's sovereignty is revealed in Genesis 25 as He selected one son to be favored over another.

I. God sovereignly selects Isaac to be the heir of the Abrahamic estate over Ishmael and the sons of Keturah (vv. 1-18)

v. 1

After Sarah's death, Abraham remarried (he married a woman who is called a concubine – I Chron. 1:32).

"Abraham at age 125 (well beyond retirement age) is starting a whole new family; he is surrounded by pre-schoolers!" (Swindoll, p. 152).

v. 2-4

God, who knew the future perfectly, foretold of Abraham being the father of "many nations" (Gen. 17:4, 5). Not only would he be the patriarch of the 12 tribes of Israel, but he would be the patriarch of many other nations, including many Arab nations.

v. 5

It is interesting to note that Abraham hands over his entire estate to Isaac, even though he had six other sons by Keturah and Ishmael by Hagar.

Why? Because Isaac was the "firstborn" son, the "only begotten" ("unique" – cp. Heb. 11:17), the one and only son of Sarah, the son of promise (Gal. 4:28), the son in whom Abraham's seed was to be called (Gen. 21:12).

v. 6

The other sons of Abraham via Hagar and Keturah are not sent away empty-handed, but are given gifts of affection.

Abraham then has them move eastward (toward Jordan, Edom, and Arabia) away from Isaac so that:

--there would be no rivals to Isaac
--there would be no confusion as to who would inherit the land of promise (Gen. 15:7, 18)
--there would be no intermarriage and blurring of the line of Isaac

Isaac was not to leave Canaan land (24:6).

v. 8

Abraham would live to the ripe old age of 175, yet even he had an appointment to meet God and to depart from this life.

"Was gathered unto his people" – Since God is not the God of the dead but of the living, Abraham upon death joined the other fellow believers ("his people") who had gone on to glory prior to him.

There is life after death! There is a Christian family reunion.

v. 9

Just as Isaac and Ishmael together pay mutual respect to their deceased father, so do Jacob and Esau at Isaac's death (35:29).

v. 11

As in 25:5, God again draws our attention to the particular, chosen son of Abraham, whom God blessed and worked in and through after the great patriarch's death. God's blessing moved from Abraham to Isaac now.

The word *"la'hai-roi"* means: "The Living One sees me" (cp. Gen. 16:14). And God, the ever-present one, the all-knowing one, did see Isaac and bless him.

v. 12

Although Ishmael was not the favored son through whom God would build his chosen nation, he (being a s on of Abraham) is significant enough that god describes his descendents and records his death, but nothing beyond that.

v. 17

Ishmael lived 48 years after the death of his dad, Abraham (cp. V. 7 with 16:16). Then he, like his father, is said to be **"gathered unto his people"** – an indication that he too shared the faith of Abraham and went on to glory.

II. God sovereignly selects Jacob to be the heir over Esau (vv. 19-23)

v. 21

The sovereign One of the universe opens and closes the womb. Children are a gift from God.

v. 22

Rebekah thought, "If God has answered our prayers and has blessed us with a child, what is going on in my womb? What is this turmoil all about?"

There is often enough commotion in the womb with one baby – but with two who were wrestling even before birth, can you imagine the pulsations of Rebekah's stomach?!

"The struggle within Rebekah's womb foreshadowed the struggle between the two peoples (the Edomites and the Israelites)." (Ryrie note)

Esau would be the father of the Edomite people and Jacob of the Israelites.

v. 23

God, being the sovereign One of the universe, knew that the two children would be:

1) the progenitors of two nations
2) different in most every way (looks, personality, character, etc.)
3) distinct in power militarily (Israel over Edom)

And God knew that the birthright would go to the younger, Jacob.

"By sovereign selection, God declared that the promised line would belong to Jacob, the younger son. Jacob thus owed his supremacy not to the natural order or to the human will, but to divine election." (Ross, p. 439).

"When God chose the younger over the elder, he upset the natural order of society and prepared the way for opposition and antagonism (SEE: Matt. 19:30; 20:16). . . those who claim to be the chosen of God cannot expect the world to congratulate them (cf. John 15:18-19)." (Ross, p. 440).

SEE: Romans 9:6ff
The theological implications of God's selection of Isaac and Jacob:

Romans 9 is often called "the most overlooked chapter in the Bible."
Because of its complexities and controversial content, many ignore it.
Peter said that some of Paul's writings were "hard to be understood" (II Pet. 3:16). This chapter is certainly among the more difficult.

The heresy of "universalism" teaches that all men will be saved.

The Bible, on the other hand, teaches that a minority will be saved, and that the majority will walk the wide road which leads to destruction (Mt. 7).

After describing the eternal blessings of our salvation in Christ (8:28-39), and lamenting over the fact that His own people (as a nation) are missing out on God's salvation, Paul now answers the question: Why?

Why cannot God save His own people Israel as a nation?

If this (Paul's) message is true, why did the Jews reject it?
The main thrust of Romans 9 (as a whole) does not describe personal election, but national election (God's choosing of Israel).
NOTE: However, the illustrations and applications given by Paul in this chapter do support the doctrine of personal election.

***God chooses whom He will save!**

A statement like this one prompts two immediate questions which we will seek to answer:

If God does not save everyone (particularly of Israel) -

1) Has He failed? & 2) Is He fair?

1. If God does not choose everyone (all in Israel) to be saved: <u>Has God FAILED</u>? (v. 6-13)

(Answer: <u>No</u>! Because God never promised He would save all who are physically related to Abraham.)

a. God's choosing was never based on <u>physical descent</u> (v. 6-9)
(Salvation has nothing to do with whom you are related to)

V. 6

Did not God make promises to the nation (v. 4)? Did not He adopt them (v. 4)?

Has God's Word failed? (become of "none effect")

Literally: "Has God's Word <u>fallen down</u> from its exalted place and become of no enduring effect" (perfect tense)

Has God's Word, like a ship blown by the winds of circumstance, gone off its course?

God's answer is "No." For the simple reason that God never promised to save the entire nation from their sin.

Just because the nation of Israel in the Old Testament are called the "people of God" did not mean that they all knew God or that they were "saved" in the spiritual sense of the term.

As a <u>whole</u> the nation belonged to God, but not all of the people of the nation did.

Just because someone can trace his genealogy back to Israel does not make him a true Israelite.

V. 7

God never said that all those who physically proceeded from Abraham would be redeemed.

Abraham had two prominent sons - Ishmael and Isaac.

God in His sovereignty chose Isaac (Gen. 21:12).

Isaac was to be the "only begotten" (unique) son of Abraham (Heb. 11:18).

The blessings would flow through Isaac.

V. 8

One does not become a child of God simply because he is born into a particular family or race.

V. 9

"At this time will I come" - It was Christ preincarnate as "the Messenger of YAHWEH" who made this statement (cp. Gen. 18:1, 10; with Jn. 8:56).

V. 7-9

"It is not what we get from our fathers and mothers that ensures our place in the family of God" (Denney cited by Thomas, p. 253).

The main point of vv. 6-9 is: Even when God was forming the nation, He was selective, so why would God be viewed as inconsistent for being selective at present (in Paul's day)?

In other words: Israel's unbelief does not contradict God's character or Word.

God is in no way inconsistent with His promises and prophecies. He has always been selective.

b. God's choosing was never based on personal merit
(v. 10-13)
(Salvation has nothing to do with what you do)

V. 10-13

God's choosing of Jacob over Esau is even stronger proof of divine election than that of Isaac over Ishmael because Jacob and Esau were both legitimate children (Ishmael was not); they were twin brothers of the same mother; Isaac and Ishmael were from different mothers (SEE Thomas, p. 251).

V. 13

"Esau have I hated" - Hatred does not mean "antagonism against" as it does today. It simply refers to someone who is not preferred above someone else. It is a comparative term which means to "love less"

(Cp. Lk. 14:26; Mt. 6:24 - where Jesus taught that to be His disciple, one had to "hate" even family. "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple" - Lk. 14:26)

The words :love and hate" in this context are not a matter of "personal feeling, but a deliberate decision in favor of one rather than the other" (Thomas, p. 252).

God choose to give the blessing (birthright) to Jacob (this is agapa love); He chose not to give it to Esau (this is all that is meant by the word "hate").

2. If God does not choose everyone (all in Israel) to be saved:
Is God FAIR? (V. 14-33)
(Answer: Yes! Because of four reasons.)
[The Vindication of God's Sovereignty]

V. 14

Is God unrighteous for showing favoritism on Jacob (who did nothing good) over Esau (who did nothing evil)?

Is God unfair? unjust? wrong?
"God forbid" = May it never be!

a. God is fair in <u>showing mercy</u> to whomever He chooses
(v. 15-18)
(God's <u>will</u> shows His righteous sovereignty)

V. 15

It is God's character to be merciful and compassionate, but God is not obligated to be such to everyone. Especially since no one deserves it.
"Mercy" = the withholding of deserved punishment (to not give someone what he deserves).

No one deserves mercy. If it could be deserved, it would not be mercy.

God would be unrighteous if we deserved mercy and He did not give it to us. But the facts are that no one deserves mercy.

The very word "mercy" shows that the object of such mercy stands guilty and has not earned it.

ILLUS: Napoleon and the mother who begged mercy for her guilty son - Green #873.
ILLUS: If I have a dollar bill and choose to give it to _____ instead of _____, is there unrighteousness in me? No. I am free to give it to whomever I choose.

ILLUS: Picture in your mind:
--Someone who owns a leather coat manufacturing company in NYC.
--Outside his company are 100 homeless vandals who each had a part in breaking his windows, graffiti-ing his building, and cursing him as he left the factory each day.
--Despite what they did to him and his company property, the owner ironically displays up in front of his building a large sign which says: "FREE COAT - Just ring the bell and ask for it."

Everyone who walks by sees the sign but -
--Some couldn't read it, so they never came.
--Others were too proud to ask for a coat, so they never came.
--Others heard many lies and bad things about the coat company which turned them off.
--Some frankly didn't feel they needed a coat.
Since no one came, the compassionate owner went one step further. He went out into the streets and selected 10 unworthy and uninterested homeless

vandals and took them by the hand one by one and led them to the coat company. He then gave them each a brand new coat.

--Is the owner unfair (unjust) because he didn't also give a coat to the 90 other homeless vandals? NO! Why? Because he was under no obligation to give them all one! Actually, no one deserved one! But because of his grace and mercy, he of his own will chose out 10.

V. 16

"Willeth" (Man's desire) . . . "runneth" (man's efforts).

Our reception of God's mercy and compassion had nothing to do with our desiring it or working for it; but it simply comes to us because of God's arbitrary choice to give it to us.

"Willeth...runneth" - Both words point to human efforts and "human striving and may reflect the symbol of an athletic contest" (Reinecker, citing Mitchel, p. 369).

God did not merely choose you because He knew you would choose Him, but in fact He had to choose you because He knew you wouldn't choose Him!

"There is none that seeketh after God" (Ro. 3:11)

Ps. 14:3 - "They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy: there is none that doeth good, no, not one."

Conclusion:

The practical implications of the Sovereignty of God:

God is Sovereign *(The control/authority of God)*

What is sovereignty?

It describes His authority over all creation. His rulership, His authority, His throne.

God is "subject to none, influenced by none, absolutely independent; God does as He pleases, only as He pleases, always as He pleases" (Pink).

God says, "I will do all my pleasure" (Is. 46:10). God is working all things "after the counsel of His own will" (Eph. 1:11).

Words that describe God's sovereignty:

1) "The most high God" (Gen. 14:20)
2) "The God of gods (Dt. 10:17)
3) "The Lord of lords" (Dt. 10:17)
4) "King" (Ps. 29:10; 47:2, 3, 7, 8; Dan.4:37)

5) "Judge" (Ps. 75:7)
6) "Ruler" (Mic.5:2; Dan.4:34-35)
7) "Lawgiver" (Is. 33:22)
8) "The Author and Finisher" (Heb.12:2)

*God is in control!

a. God is sovereign over <u>HEAVEN & EARTH</u> (Deut. 10:14-17)

(God is in control of the <u>universe</u>)

God has every right and ability to be sovereign over creation because He is the Creator of it (II Ki. 19:15).

God is called: "Possessor of heaven and earth" (Gen. 14:19)

The harlot Rahab admitted: "The LORD your God, he is God in heaven above, and in earth beneath" (Josh. 2:11).

1) God is in control of Heaven

"Thy kingdom come. Thy will be cone on earth as it is in heaven. Thine is the kingdom. . ." (Mt. 6:10, 13)

2) God is in control of Earth

". . . the earth is the Lord's" (Ex. 9:26).

Ps. 24:1 - "The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, the world, and they that dwell therein."

SEE Ps. 50:10-12.

Who is regulating affairs on this earth today--God or the devil? (Pink). God or man? God or mere chance?

Even though the earth <u>ultimately</u> belongs to God and is ultimately under the control of God:

---He has ordained <u>man</u> to subdue it (Gen. 1:26-28; cp. Ps. 115:16)

---He has allowed <u>Satan</u> an element of influence over the world's system (Lk. 4:5-6; II Cor. 4:4).

a) God controls the earth's <u>weather</u>

(1) Miraculously - Exod. 9:29 (hailstorm in Egypt)
Josh. 10:12-14 (sun stood still for 24 extra hours)
James 5:17-18 (rain delay for 3 years & 6 months)

(2) Providentially -
The Lord upholds all things by the word of His power (Heb. 1:3)
"By Him all things consist (hold together)" (Col.1:17)

b) God controls the earth's <u>food supply</u>

EX: 7 year famine in Canaan & Egypt (Gen. 41:29-32)

b. God is sovereign over <u>KINGS & NATIONS</u>

(God is in control of emperors and empires)

Seated infinitely above every seat of power, exalted above every

ruler, elevated above every emperor, raised above every King and Queen, advanced above every President, above every dignitary, every guru,…sits the Supreme One of the Universe.

1) God is in control of kings

God is "He that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers; that bringeth the princes to nothing; He maketh the judges of the earth as vanity" (Is. 40:22-23).
SEE: Prov. 21:1 - "The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD. . ." (cp. Ezra 6:22, 7:27).

It is God who removes kings and sets up kings (Dan. 2:21).
EX: Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. 4:3, 17, 25, 35-37)
Belshazzar (Dan. 5:18, 26-28)

2) God is in control of nations (Deut. 32:8, 39)

He withholds land from those to whom He chooses (Deut. 2:19).
Don't seek <u>exaltation</u> from men, but from God (Ps. 75:6-7).
"The LORD reigneth; let the people tremble" (Ps. 90:1).
Every knee will one day bow (Is. 45:28).

c. God is sovereign over the lives of <u>EACH INDIVIDUAL</u>
(God is in control of all that has breath)

Moses called the LORD - "The God of the spirits of all flesh"
God Himself declared: "Behold, all souls are mine" (Ezek. 18:4).
"We are clay, He is the potter" (Jer. 18:6).

1) Man's <u>personality</u> and <u>abilities</u> from conception are in His hands (Ps. 139:13-16; Ex. 4:11)

Example of Jeremiah: God sovereignly prepared and ordained this man to be His prophet even before birth (Jer. 1:4-8)
Example of Paul: God…"separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by His grace" (Gal.1:15)

Solomon observed "that the righteous, and the wise, and their works, are in the <u>hand</u> of God" (Eccl. 9:1).

No one has any strength unless God allows it; no one has any wealth, fame, wisdom or power unless God allows it.

As Jesus said to Pilate, who thought he had power to either crucify or release Jesus: "Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above." (Jn. 19:11a)

2) Man's <u>circumstances of life</u> are in His hands
God "hath determined the times before appointed" (Acts 17:26).
Hannah's testimony to God's sovereignty - I Sam. 2:6-8.

3) Man's very breath and heart beat are in His hands
In God's "hand is the soul of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind." (Job 12:10).
". . . None can keep alive his own soul" (Ps. 22:29).
". . . I have the keys of death and hell" (Rev. 1:18).
Jesus has all authority (Mt. 28:19) over:
a) the timing of death, and
b) the place of the departed dead
"It is appointed (reserved) unto man once to die…" (Heb.9:27)
When God says you have breathed your last breath, you will not breath another"

Application:
Don't trust in "uncertain riches" but in the living God (I Tim. 6:15-17).

d. God is sovereign over the SALVATION of men
(God is in control of man's eternal destiny)

1) God alone chooses how He will save (Eph. 1:3-11)
(God's sovereignty and the plan of salvation)
Certainly, the One who owns Heaven reserves the right to determine the conditions that must be met in order for one to go into His Heaven.
It is presumption, pride, and foolishness for man to assume that he knows what is the way to eternal life without seeking to know god's way. "There is a way that seemeth right unto a man.."

2) God alone chooses whom He will save (I Th. 2:13; Rom. 9:14-29)
(God's sovereignty and the people of salvation)
God's sovereignty in salvation:
Jonah 2:9- "Salvation is of the Lord"
John 3:27 – "A man can receive nothing unless it has been given him from above"
John 15:16 – "You have not chosen me but I have chosen you"
Eph.1:3 – "Chosen in Him before the foundation of the world"
II Tim.1:9 – "…before the world began"
Titus 1:1 – "the faith of God's elect"
I Pet.2:9 – "You are a chosen generation"

John 6:37
All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.
John 6:39
And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day.
John 6:44

No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day.
John 6:65
And he said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father.
1 Peter 1:2
Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied.
Acts 13:48
And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.

Sovereignty does not exclude human <u>responsibility</u>

In Genesis 25, God had clearly revealed that the "elder (Esau) would serve the younger (Jacob)", YET ESAU WOULD BE HELD RESPONSIBLE FOR SELLING HIS BIRTHRIGHT!

"Is man a mere puppet whose actions are determined by a behind-the-scenes God who pulls the strings as it pleases Him?" (Tozer, p. 184).

A belief in God's sovereignty is <u>not</u> a <u>fatalistic</u> attitude.

We cannot have a "whatever will be, will be" attitude.

God has given man a <u>will</u> by which we can choose to do His will or not to choose to do His will.

God is so sovereign that He can give mankind freedom of choice, and yet everything still fulfills His perfect plan.

"A God less than sovereign could not bestow moral freedom upon His creatures. He would be afraid to do so" (Tozer, p. 185).
Everything will turn out as God planned it would even though man is a free moral agent with liberty to make choices for which he is responsible.

Sovereignty does not exclude human <u>accountability</u>.

Man will answer for his <u>own</u> sin. God is not responsible for it.

Question regarding sovereignty:
If God controls everything and nothing happens outside of His allowing it:
--Why did He allow sin to enter the world? (SEE Rom. 9:22)

(1) So that He could show His wrath
God's wrath is one aspect of His nature that would forever go unseen if he had not allowed sin to enter the world.

(2) So that He could show His power
(a) God's power is seen in His ability to judge
(b) God's power is seen in His ability to redeem sinners

e. God is sovereign over FUTURE EVENTS
(God is in control of what lies ahead)
NOTE: The connection between God's pre-determined plan and His foreknowledge (Acts 2:23)

Isaiah 41:4
Who hath wrought and done it, calling the generations from the beginning? I the Lord, the first, and with the last; I am he.

Isaiah 42:9
Behold, the former things are come to pass, and new things do I declare: before they spring forth I tell you of them.

Isaiah 46:10
Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure:

Isaiah 48:5
I have even from the beginning declared it to thee; before it came to pass I shewed it thee: lest thou shouldest say, Mine idol hath done them, and my graven image, and my molten image, hath commanded them.

Isaiah 48:6
Thou hast heard, see all this; and will not ye declare it? I have shewed thee new things from this time, even hidden things, and thou didst not know them.

Acts 15:18 - "Known unto God are all His works from the beginning of the world."

"Who is he that saith, and it cometh to pass, when the Lord commanded it not?" (Lam. 3:37).

* THE PRACTICAL APPLICATION OF GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY

Because God is sovereign:

He needs no permission to do what He wants.

He goes to no one for advice.
(There is no higher court of appeal than God)

No one changes or interrupts His plan

1) God has every right to tell us what to do.
Is He on the throne of your life?

2) God is worthy of our complete trust.
Everything is under His control (Rom. 8:28)

Nothing happens by accident.

Nothing catches God off guard.

Nothing surprises God.

Why? Because He is sovereign over all.

Such a sovereign God is worthy of your trust.