



Years ago, I remember reading a true story about a woman who was asked to sing in a very fancy wedding. This was a privilege for her, and then afterwards, from what it sounded like, there was practically no expense spared at the reception. When the woman and her husband arrived at the reception to be seated, there were people with the invitation list, and they asked her name. She proceeded to tell them her name, but they couldn't find her name in the book. She then defended herself by saying she sang in the wedding. Surely she would be able to stay. But since her name wasn't in the book, she was escorted out of the reception area and taken to the elevator. Her heart sank. She was sent back to her car. Once in the car, her husband asked what happened. She said that she did receive the invitation, but she assumed that since she was singing in the wedding, she wouldn't need to RSVP. She was already a special guest. She made the wrong assumption, and I can only imagine she never made that mistake again.

I share this illustration because as we enter into Genesis 25 this morning, we are going to read about various people who were connected to Abraham – even treated as special by Abraham – but there was only one who had the special blessing of God. These 18 verses speak of Abraham's descendants. His many children who were natural children. Yet, there's only one child who was supernaturally born. This one receives the supernatural blessing. The rest receive natural blessing.

I can't help but wonder if at least one point in these 18 verses is to emphasize that just because you have a physical connection to Abraham, doesn't mean you can share in the same blessing as Abraham. In other words, you can be at the wedding, but that doesn't mean you'll make it to the glorious reception. You need a supernatural connection with Abraham. So, let me give the main idea of the sermon today: **The supernatural son of Abraham, not the natural children, receives the blessing of the Lord.** Now, even as I say all this, I might be sounding confusing. So, let me take some steps back and let's read these 18 verses together, and then I'll give a synopsis of the text:

25 Abraham took another wife, whose name was Keturah. 2 She bore him Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak, and Shuah. 3 Jokshan fathered Sheba and Dedan. The sons of Dedan were Asshurim, Letushim, and Leummim. 4 The sons of Midian were Ephah, Epher, Hanoah, Abida, and Eldaah. All these were the children of Keturah. 5 Abraham gave all he had to Isaac. 6 But to the sons of his concubines Abraham gave gifts, and while he was still living he sent them away from his son Isaac, eastward to the east country. 7 These are the days of the years of Abraham's life, 175 years. 8 Abraham breathed his last and died in a good old age, an old man and full of years, and was gathered to his people. 9 Isaac and Ishmael his sons buried him in the cave of Machpelah, in the field of Ephron the son of Zohar the Hittite, east of Mamre, 10 the field that Abraham purchased from the Hittites. There Abraham was buried, with Sarah his wife. 11 After the death of Abraham, God blessed Isaac his

son. And Isaac settled at Beer-lahai-roi. 12 These are the generations of Ishmael, Abraham's son, whom Hagar the Egyptian, Sarah's servant, bore to Abraham. 13 These are the names of the sons of Ishmael, named in the order of their birth: Nebaioth, the firstborn of Ishmael; and Kedar, Adbeel, Mibsam, 14 Mishma, Dumah, Massa, 15 Hadad, Tema, Jetur, Naphish, and Kedemah. 16 These are the sons of Ishmael and these are their names, by their villages and by their encampments, twelve princes according to their tribes. 17 (These are the years of the life of Ishmael: 137 years. He breathed his last and died, and was gathered to his people.) 18 They settled from Havilah to Shur, which is opposite Egypt in the direction of Assyria. He settled over against all his kinsmen. 1

Backdrop. In case your mind wandered during the reading, let's make sure we're all on the same page here. The chapter begins by saying that Abraham took another wife, but then in verse 6, we're told that she's a concubine. Which is it? Well, in the ancient world, there were contexts where there were varying degrees of commitment in polygamous societies. Hagar, for example, was Abraham's wife's handmaid; so, she had a higher status. This woman, Keturah, was clearly given the status of Abraham's commitment, but wasn't at the level of Sarah.

As I say all of this, I simply want to restate what I've said before: God does not approve of polygamy. In Genesis 2, Moses writes to Israel God's design for marriage: **Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.**² This "therefore," is the conclusion of the matter. One man, singular, and one wife, singular. They together will become one flesh. Now, you could say, "But why does it seem like God tolerates concubines and multiple wives in the Old Testament?" Well, when Jesus is on the earth, he says that God's Law contained laws within it that recognized people's sinfulness (see Mk. 10:5). I think the reality is that throughout time, God worked very patiently with people to progressively reveal his will. As it relates to marriage, this is one of those issues because by the time we get to Jesus' teaching, the disciples are shocked at how committed we are to be in our marriages, but because of Jesus' ministry, our Savior clearly displays that marriage was always made to be between one man and one woman. All said, as we look at this text, we should recognize God's patience with Abraham – and also his grace to the many children Abraham had.

But one other thing you could wonder is, "When did Abraham take Keturah as his wife?" Based on the age of Abraham at Sarah's death, I don't think it's feasible that he could have this many children before dying at 175 years old. In addition, we're told in Romans 4:19 that when Isaac was conceived Abraham's body was as good as dead – meaning, he really couldn't procreate. If you keep in mind what David said last week that ancient authors didn't always communicate in terms of timelines, I think that's important to note here. So, when did Abraham take Keturah? He could have had her from his early days, even before he went to the promised land. We just don't know. And so, I think we ought to be content with not knowing. Clearly, the focus is on the children of Keturah and how they relate to Abraham.

The names of Abraham's children through Keturah are future people groups, and they live in different areas of Arabia, near Egypt. How'd they get there? Well, before Abraham dies, he gives these children gifts and he sends them away from the promised land. This is *south* and *southeast* of the promised land. It makes sense that Moses would give this information here at the announcement of Abraham's death.

¹ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ge 25:1–18.

² [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ge 2:24.

It's kind of like reading the results of a will. What happened to Abraham's family and estate? This is what we see from Keturah's children.

Then we also see Ishmael show up again. Ishmael and Isaac are unique children because of the status in the family. And so, we read that Ishmael and Isaac bury Abraham where Sarah is buried – in the cave that Abraham had purchased decades before. And in the text, we're told that Abraham is buried with Sarah and his people. That's an intriguing statement because who are "his people" if all we know is that Sarah is buried there?

After this, we're given more information about Ishmael and his children. Ishmael and his lineage don't live in Arabia, but in the Assyrian region. This is *north* and *northeast* of the promised land. Think last week's sermon and how the servant of Abraham had to travel weeks to go north to find Rebekah. It's that region and beyond. And in this area, Ishmael and his lineage is blessed, too. He turns into 12 tribes – large and powerful people groups. However, Ishmael becomes very troublesome for Abraham other children. Not only is Ishmael "over" them all in being to the north. But that is symbolic of how Ishmael's people treat his brothers. He's *over and against them* in trying to gain control.

Now, in the midst of all of these names and even locations, only a few words are given to Isaac. These other children are all gifts and/or blessed by Abraham, but the very few words given to Isaac are more meaningful and powerful. Look at verse 11: ¹¹After the death of Abraham, God blessed Isaac his son. And Isaac settled at Beer-lahai-roi.³ That should resonate with us. It's not just that Abraham blessed Isaac. It's that God *blessed* Isaac. Something very special and unique and truly supernatural is going on here.

And so, we ought to ask, "Why did God uniquely bless Isaac?" Did he bless Isaac because Isaac was a biological child of Abraham? No. Did he bless Isaac because Isaac was somehow more moral or superior than the other siblings? No. Did Isaac win some kind challenge? No. God blessed Isaac because God promised that he would bless through the unique seed of the woman, Sarah. God's blessing to Isaac is not based on Isaac's ability or morality or impressive resume. God blesses Isaac on the basis of his promise! And that should be tremendously encouraging to Isaac because if God's promise rested on Isaac's ability or character, then God's blessing could be taken back someday if Isaac changes.

So, what we see in these verses that discuss Abraham's death and lineage is that God is faithful to his promise, and that his promise of blessing is based on himself – not on anything else. God's promise isn't based on "bloodline, or the will of the flesh, or the will of man, but on God." This ought to also be a tremendous encouragement to us as well. If you are blessed by God, it's not because of yourself. It's not because you're impressive resume. It's not because you're connected to Abraham's bloodline. Instead, it's like what the apostle John wrote in John 1. You are born again and blessed ". . .**not of [bloodline] nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.**"⁴ If your blessing is based in God, then you are secure! **The supernatural son of Abraham, not the natural children, receives the blessing of the Lord.** But what does this mean, and how do we see this in this death and distribution text? Let's break it down now.

1. What is the blessing?

When we see that God blessed Isaac, that's very specific terminology. It's referencing all the way back to the beginning of God's call of Abraham out of his homeland. In Genesis 12:1-3, we read, "**Go from your**

³ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ge 25:11.

⁴ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Jn 1:13.

country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. ² And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. ³ I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.” ⁵ This covenant is expanded in a couple of places, like in 22:17, where God adds, “¹⁷ I will surely bless you, and I will surely multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. And your offspring shall possess the gate of his enemies. . .”⁶

This blessing is specific, and it actually goes further back than Abraham. Moses, in writing Genesis, connects this promise all the way back to his promise to Adam and Eve to send One who will crush the serpent. There will be one to come to reverse the curse that's been brought over the entire cosmos. This physical world will be redeemed and restored – and humanity will be given a Savior they can trust in who will forgive and cleanse them of their sins, and reconcile them back with God, who they were made for.

This serpent crusher will come as “the seed of the woman.” Then we get to Abraham, and God promises a seed. And specifically, it's the miraculous birth of Isaac. He's the next in line leading to *the* someday serpent crusher. So, the promise is progressing from Abraham and now on to Isaac. This is a special blessing because this is an eternal blessing. As we've seen in the book of Hebrews, Abraham and Sarah knew that the promise for land, people, and victory of enemies was bigger than just a plot of land in today's Israel. It was cosmic. It was a promise of an eternal, everlasting home. Hebrews 11:16 says “**they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city.**”⁷ The “they” here isn't only Abraham and Sarah, but includes Isaac – as the author also says that Isaac and Jacob were heirs with Abraham in the same promise (Heb. 11:9).

Hence, get back to the text and we read that Abraham was gathered with his people. What does that even mean? According to studies on this verbiage, this indicates a clear understanding of an afterlife and that people like Abraham would meet each other on the other side. While it's only Abraham and Sarah in that cave, Abraham would be with Noah, Abel, Adam, Eve and all others who depended on the Lord for forgiveness and rescue. The same will be true for Isaac. So again, this promise, while it does include this physical world today, has much broader ramifications than the here and now. The promises for the here-and-now world are just seeds for a blessing of eternal and cosmic proportions!

I say it this way because when you compare Isaac with Ishmael and Keturah's children, you could be tempted to think that they became greater. Maybe they got the greater blessings. I know that the Israelites who were wandering in the dessert thought the other nations around them had greater blessing. They had land. They had power. They had horses and chariots. They had all sorts of food and “blessings.”

We think this way, don't we? I'm often reminded of my flawed thinking when I'm tempted to say “God is good,” when I get something I want; but I'm tempted to think that God has forgotten or is against me when I don't get what I want. I've already mentioned a couple of weeks ago a friend of mine who is 40 and has stage 4 liver cancer. At that diagnosis, is God good? Yes. If God heals her in this life, is God good? Yes! If God heals her in the next, is God still good? Absolutely.

But that's so difficult for us to think, isn't it? We often evaluate God on the basis of what we can see. However, this book of Genesis is calling us to see things differently. We should evaluate what we see on the basis of God and his promises. Cancer doesn't change God. Chronic pain doesn't change God. Various difficulties or various joys in this life don't change God. God is always supremely glorious and worthy. God

⁵ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ge 12:1–3.

⁶ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ge 22:17.

⁷ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Heb 11:16.

is good all the time! But we can only believe this if we have our spiritual eyes opened and set on eternity! The apostle Paul summons us to **“²Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. ³For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. ⁴When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. ⁵Put to death therefore what is earthly in you. . .”⁸** If we know the value of God and eternal life, our lives today will be changed. Is your life changed, believer? If you believe, believe and live like it! Set your minds on things above. Keep setting it over and over again every day!

But if we don't set our minds on things above, we will think God is good only when we get the stuff we want, and we'll miss the point of life. Do you remember Jesus' words when he says, **“²⁶For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul?”⁹** You can have all the physical, tangible gifts in this life, but that is not real blessing because Jesus says right before this, **“²⁵For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.”¹⁰** If you try to grasp for control and find your security and peace in things of this life, you will lose life. You're looking to this world as your Savior. But if you look to Jesus as your eternal blessing, he is *the* Savior, and you have eternal life. Even when you die, you don't lose. You gain.

Getting back to this text, the blessing that God gave Isaac was this eternal blessing that ended up culminating in Jesus, the serpent crusher. This is the greatest blessing of all. So, Isaac could say “Ishmael and Keturah's kids, have the world. But give me God!” This leads to the next reality we see that I've already somewhat commented on:

2. Natural sons do not receive the blessing.

The natural sons of Abraham do receive gifts and blessing, but not *the* blessing. There are two realities I want to pull out from these gifts and blessings.

First, **through Abraham the world is blessed.** Do you realize how many people groups come from Keturah's and Ishmael's lineage? Think again about the original readers here. I would imagine Moses' wife probably read this. She was a midianite, and Midian comes from Keturah. Think about Ishmael and how Assyria comes from Ishmael, the large nation that wars against Israel hundreds of years later, and yet God even shows mercy to these great nations. The seeds of mercy and grace are sown even here. While Abraham doesn't give Keturah's sons the blessing, he does give them gifts. Didn't God say that through Abraham all the nations would be blessed? Yes. Therefore, Abraham's hand was outstretched and open to offer kindness to his other children.

Additionally, if you remember the scenario where Ishmael and Hagar were sent away, God promised Abraham that he would make of Ishmael many nations and bless him in that way. Now we read that Ishmael has twelve tribes coming from him. He's blessed with a posterity and power and authority and immense strength. God has blessed Ishmael.

But again, there's a clear contrast between these children and Isaac. We read in verse 17 about Ishmael, **“¹⁷(These are the years of the life of Ishmael: 137 years. He breathed his last and died, and was gathered to his people.)”¹¹** This is a contrast with Abraham. Ishmael is gathered with *his* people. He's not in the promised land awaiting the promise of God. He's gathered with his people. Who are his people? They're

⁸ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Col 3:2–5.

⁹ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Mt 16:26.

¹⁰ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Mt 16:25.

¹¹ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ge 25:17.

naturally born from Abraham and living their own way – just like the people throughout the ages before them, like Lamech or the people in Noah’s day. This leads me to the second point.

Second, **natural blessings do not guarantee eternal blessing.** I know I already commented on this with Isaac, and with us as Christians, but I want to view it from a different perspective. You could be a person who thinks that because you are “blessed,” that God is approving of you. Maybe you work hard, have a nice house, good savings, morality, and general contentment or happiness that you’re fine. You have a hard time believing there’s a judgment you’ll face. You don’t acknowledge that you’re just using God’s gifts and presuming on them. You’re not valuing God supremely, you just love your stuff, and you’re trusting in the stuff to give you eternal life. Maybe you think that being a spiritual person and coming to church is enough. Oh, I want to lovingly warn you. There is a Heaven and a Hell. There is a God who is all-powerful, holy, and gloriously good. And he is just in all his ways.

Instead of viewing all the kindnesses in your life as an excuse to presume on God’s grace, you ought to turn to him and turn from your sinfulness. In Romans 2:4-5, the apostle Paul writes, **“⁴ Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God’s kindness is meant to lead you to repentance? ⁵ But because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God’s righteous judgment will be revealed.”¹²** Many people from Ishmael and from Keturah’s sons presumed on God’s kindnesses, and God’s righteous judgment has been stored up for them. But there were others, like Moses’ wife or the Ninevites who repented. What about you? Are you presuming on God’s kindnesses and not turning to him? But you might say, “What’s the point? I’m not Isaac! I can’t be a supernatural son!” But that’s wrong. You can be a supernatural son or daughter!

3. Supernatural children receive the blessing.

As we think about this narrative, and look at the brief description of Isaac in verse 11, we read that Isaac settled in Beer-lahai-roi. This was where Hagar cried out to the Lord and the Lord heard her. This is a place where Isaac will pray for his wife to conceive. This is also a place that Abraham had beginnings, and Israel went through in the beginning of their journey in the Promised Land. **Beer-lahai-roi communicates beginnings and prayer/dependence.** Remember, Isaac wasn’t blessed because he was impressive. He wasn’t blessed because he was a natural born son of Abraham. He was blessed because of God’s promise.

And Isaac, as already stated, pointed forward to *the seed* of the woman, through whom people from all nations could find eternal blessing. Instead of simply being natural born, we could be supernaturally born again. In Galatians 3:16, the apostle Paul says, **“¹⁶ Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring. It does not say, “And to offsprings,” referring to many, but referring to one, “And to your offspring,” who is Christ.”¹³** Ultimately the promise was to one seed of the woman, who is Jesus! And then a little later Paul wrote, **“²⁹ And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s offspring, heirs according to promise.”¹⁴** If you have been united with Jesus through dependence on him, crying out for grace, you now are a supernatural child of Abraham. You have received eternal blessing.

Have you turned to Jesus? Do you see how God’s kindnesses are meant to lead you to repentance? Do you believe that eternity is of greater value than this temporal world? Are you blessed in Christ? Think back to the original illustration I gave about the woman and the wedding. You’ve been given God’s

¹² [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ro 2:4–5.

¹³ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ga 3:16.

¹⁴ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ga 3:29.

kindness. It's his invitation to the feast. Will you enter the feast having received Christ or presuming on his kindnesses? This was Jesus' message when he was on the earth and speaking with religious leaders. John the Baptist, pointing to Jesus, said in Matthew 3:9, **"And do not presume to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father,' for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham."**¹⁵ Therefore, the apostle John affirms the message of Genesis, which is the message of God throughout the Scriptures, **"But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, ¹³ who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God."**¹⁶ Are you naturally born or are you born from God? Do you trust in Jesus alone as your salvation or in the things that you can see? And, if you trust Christ, are you enjoying the feast? Is your mind set on things above, living in the blessing you have *right now*? **The supernatural son of Abraham, not the natural children, receives the eternal blessing of the Lord.**

¹⁵ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Mt 3:9.

¹⁶ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Jn 1:12–13.