

Isaac was “on his own” now with Sarah and Abraham gone. But on his own with God, the God of Abraham and of Isaac and with his wife whom he loved. When about sixty years old he had exercised his priesthood and entreated God for children by his barren wife, Rebekah, and he had been answered. It was twin sons, certainly not identical. They were each of extremely different character, but each fleshly in his own manner. The elder, when about 40 years old, despising his birthright, sold it to the younger for a supper of red pottage. It gets worse in chapter 27.

Meanwhile Isaac had to deal with a more immediate crisis, famine. No rain. If this was the promised inheritance who would want to live there? Isaac migrated westward as his father had, to Gerar, to water and greener pastures. He had been in a land inhabited by the wicked, pagan Canaanites. With them occupying it, it was subject to God’s discipline—famine. But his move placed him in a land inhabited by the Philistines. They were not as wicked as the Canaanites, nor the Egyptians.

The Philistines were not Canaanites but they were descendants of Ham through Mizraim Canaan’s younger brother. Mizraim was the father of Egypt. The Philistines had migrated out of northeastern Egypt and settled on the southwest edge of Canaan. Though these people were technically not Canaanites their land was included in God’s sweeping covenant promise to Abraham to give his descendants the land from the *River of Egypt* to the great river *Euphrates*, when the iniquity of the Amorites was full, Genesis 15:16,18.

But now God specifically promised Isaac possession of this land of the Philistines which was situated northeasterly of the *River of Egypt*, in addition to Canaan. Why? 1) Because, consistent with God’s promise to Abraham, Isaac stopped there without going on down to Egypt, and 2) because the Philistines harassed Isaac by plugging the wells he and Abraham had dug.

Don’t the wells speak of the truth of God so precious to spiritual life? The *religious world* actively plugs those wells with traditions of men, the Law of Moses, the principle of clergy/laity, systematic quenching the Holy Spirit in meetings of the local assemblies, etc., etc. Both the Philistines, and the religious world, though hospitable at first, exact a terrible price for dwelling among them.

Isaac’s migration to Gerar apparently was taken without the benefit of direction from God or an inquiry to Him. But Jehovah, the Eternal (the “LORD”) in grace next took the initiative and appeared to Isaac. He commanded Isaac not to continue on to Egypt where he appeared to be headed. Instead He gave him permission to stop a while in the land of the Philistines. He then promised to give it to Isaac and his seed —on the basis of the oath He had sworn to Abraham. God didn’t renew that oath with Isaac. All He did was refer to it. Isaac had only to believe it to receive the blessings it conveyed. Jesus isn’t crucified over and

over again for each soul to be saved. Once believing, one is to live by that faith. He is to gear his daily decisions by faith to be consistent with his initial belief. God blessed Isaac’s decision not to proceed further on down into Egypt and specifically mentioned the land of the Philistines as part of the inheritance He had already promised Abraham. The “Gaza strip” so prominent in the news today will one day be Israel’s under Christ its King. Wait until we reign with Him. Believers should avoid becoming enmeshed in the politics of the Middle east nowadays. It is none of our business. Watch with interest, but there is nothing now to be fulfilled before the rapture. Pray for the believers there, both for Christians now and for others to be called later after the Rapture, and for Christ’s coming to reign over the earth and His people Israel. “Thy kingdom come.”

Though Isaac had apparently believed God and remained in Gerar his faith was soon tested. Did he believe God wanted him there? Then would he trust God for his and his wife’s safety? He failed the same way Abraham his father had twice before, (once right here in Gerar). Isaac feared for his life because of his beautiful wife. The immoral reputation of the land was enough to stumble him into an act of unbelief. God had said specifically he would give him this land. Wouldn’t He have protected him and his wife? Though the propagation of the “promised seed” was not at stake as it had been with Abraham’s two failures, Isaac still jeopardized the love of his life, the wife of his youth. Their mutual affection, despite his denial of her, exposed the lie. (And she wasn’t even his half sister as Sarah had been to Abraham.) Abimelech was honorable, honestly stating the real risk they had taken. The Philistines seemed to respect marriage in both Abraham’s and Isaac’s cases. But they seemed customarily ready to “take” any available unmarried woman they happened to lust after.

Why was Egypt a worse place to go than the Land of the Philistines? There was no professed respect for God in Egypt. Pharaoh was held by the Egyptians to be god and he himself believed and acted as if he were. On the other hand, Abimelech, king of the Philistines, professed to respect the God of Abraham and Isaac. And God himself had spoken to the first Abimelech in a dream when protecting Sarah and Abraham, and he had acted in obedience to God’s demand.

Nevertheless Isaac had settled down there. Yet he was so blessed by God that he became both a burden and a threat to the Philistines. He was overstaying his welcome. They showed their distress by plugging the wells Isaac was using. Wells his father Abraham had dug years before. Isaac avoided direct confrontation though he knew the land and the wells were going to be his progenies’ someday. While patiently opening old wells and digging new wells he gradually was moving away from the Philistines. Finally he reached the limit of their hospitality. They asked him to leave. Then he seemed to wake up. He picked up and

moved back to Beersheba where there was a well already (the site of an oath between Abraham and a previous Abimelech). As soon as he departed and separated himself from the compromising location in the midst of the Philistines, they sought him out to make a peace treaty. There is an underlying spiritual principle in this chapter that we need to heed. Separation from evil frees the believer from the frustration and defilement a compromising position brings. God's basic principle is **separation to Him**. That is what Isaac finally did by moving to Beersheba. Then they sought him out realizing God was with him and had greatly blessed him. The Philistines represent the religious world, while Egypt, from which they had migrated, represents the world and its establishment by Cain apart from God. Accountability to the One Creator God, much less worship of Him, was unheard of and not tolerated in Egypt. Meanwhile the Philistines claimed a modicum of morality and marginally tolerated the godly temporary visitors seeking refuge from the famine. Then they took

their wives and plugged their wells. They are an apt portrayal of the religious world, having a form of godliness but denying the power thereof. Taking the church of God for themselves, hiding or distorting the truth of scripture, substituting the traditions of men. So we should do what God's command has always been:

2Corinthians 6:17 Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you,

Galatians 5:1 Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.

2Timothy 3:5 Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.

Revelation 3:1 I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead.

Where **are we** beloved? Amongst them? Or have we come out from amongst them? Or are we "them?"

By Ronald Canner, September 8, 2010