

# Jacob and Esau

**Key Verse:** *“The LORD said to her, Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples from within you will be separated; one people will be stronger than the other, and the older will serve the younger.”*  
—Genesis 25:23,  
New International  
Version

**Selected Scripture:**  
Genesis 25:19-34

## ISAAC’S WIFE REBEKAH

remained childless for many years, and this concerned him. God’s promise to Isaac’s father Abraham was, “in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.” (Gen. 22: 15-18) Isaac prayed to God concerning his lack of having a “seed,” or son. God heard Isaac’s prayer, and his wife Rebekah conceived twins.—Gen. 25:21

During Rebekah’s pregnancy, “the babies jostled each other within her, and she said, Why is this happening to me?” She prayed to God, and he answered her, saying, “Two nations are in your womb.” (vss. 22,23, *NIV*) In Old Testament times the firstborn son was given certain privileges and responsibilities, referred to as the “birthright,” and normally received a double portion of the inheritance. (Gen. 43:33; Deut. 21:15-17) However, God’s answer to Rebekah’s prayer was that “the older will serve the younger.”

The Apostle Paul referred to this incident. Concerning the twins which were in Rebekah’s womb, he said, “Before the twins were born or had done anything good or bad—in order that God’s purpose in election might stand: not

by works but by him who calls—she was told, The older will serve the younger. ... What then shall we say? Is God unjust? Not at all!”—Rom. 9:10-14, *NIV*

Here Paul alludes to the fact that Jacob and Esau were a picture or illustration. The nation of Israel was in essence a “firstborn,” as Esau was. God had first given to Israel his promises, through the Law Covenant which he had made with them and, later on, by sending his only begotten son Jesus to them as their Messiah. In general, the Jewish nation had been disobedient to God, and only a few, at the time of Jesus’ First Advent, accepted him as their Messiah and Deliverer.—John 1:11,12

Paul explains that the Gentiles, like Jacob, were not a “firstborn.” “The Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have obtained it, a righteousness that is by faith.” As a result of Jesus’ ransom sacrifice at Calvary, the Gospel Age heavenly call has been made open to all, both Jews and Gentiles. However, as a nation, “Israel, who pursued a law of righteousness, has not attained it. Why not? Because they pursued it not by faith but as if it were by works.”—Rom. 9:30-32, *NIV*

Throughout Romans chapter 11, Paul explains that although God has rejected natural Israel, it has been for only a limited time, while the church class is being called and proven faithful unto death. Paul warns us not to be arrogant, nor think too highly of ourselves because we have heard and accepted the heavenly call while many others, including natural Israel, are blind to this wonderful privilege.

When the bride of Christ is complete, then, through God’s mercy, natural Israel will be restored to full favor, and will be an example of a blessing to all people. Mankind will say, “Come ye, and let us go up to the ... house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths.” To the Jews the people will say, “We will go with you: for we have heard that God is with you.”—Isa. 2:1-3; Zech. 8:23 ■