

GENESIS

FOUNDATION BOOK OF THE BIBLE

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1.

Book of Origins

For this series I will be using a resource book by Henry Morris entitled *The Genesis Record* (Baker Books, 2009). This book will not be a line-by-line study of Genesis' 50 chapters but rather a selection of important sections of the book to discuss and analyze. I will, however, cover the entire book and attempt to review its major ideas and teachings.

The objectives for this study will be threefold:

1. Build faith in the book of Genesis as an inspired work of God.
2. Answer some of the commonly asked questions about Genesis.
3. Understand the importance and purpose of this book as part of the Bible.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE BOOK OF GENESIS

Every book of the Bible is inspired by God.

All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness;
- II Timothy 3:16

Thus, Genesis is important but some books contain information that helps us understand other parts of the Bible and thus are foundational.

In the New Testament, the gospels and the book of Acts are such books. In the Old Testament no other book is more fundamental to understanding not only the Old Testament but the New Testament, and the rest of human history and condition, as the book of Genesis.

The reason for this is that Genesis is the book which contains the vital information concerning the origin of all things and therefore the meaning of all things. These “origins” would not be accessible to us if God had not revealed and preserved them in the book of Genesis (which means *Origins*).

Historians and scientists can only speculate about the origins of life, culture, and nations, etc. but the bible actually contains this information so we that can look back and see an accurate picture of the world at its beginning, before the recording of history by man.

THE "ORIGINS" OF GENESIS

The book of Genesis describes in detail 14 origins that cover the beginning of time to the formation of a people to carry out God's plan of salvation. These origins are the foundations from which we can understand our societies as well as our environment and spiritual condition:

1. Origin of the universe

Only the book of Genesis accounts for the origin of matter, space and time. Every other religious system, scientific system or philosophy begins with eternal matter or energy in some form that is somehow developed into our present state. Only the Bible gives an account of where original matter came from.

2. Origin of order and complexity

Universal observation has stated that orderly and complex things tend to naturally dissolve into disorder and decay. For example, nature, people and objects all fall apart eventually. Genesis provides the source for the establishment of the original order and complexity of life. This is

important because all we are able to study is the rate of decay, not the origin of order.

3. Origin of the solar system

Science can count and study the stars but has not found a satisfactory explanation for their beginning. The "Big Bang" is the best they have come up with but no one can explain what caused it and what was there to blow up in the first place. The "Big Bang" is not a cause, it is an effect. Genesis explains when and how the solar system was created, and why it was created.

4. Origin of atmosphere and hydrosphere

The combination of liquid water, oxygen, and nitrogen in an atmosphere that can sustain life has only been found in its present state on the earth. Genesis explains the how, who, and why of this unique mixture here on earth.

5. Origin of life

How living systems could develop from non-living chemicals continues to be a mystery to materialistic philosophers and will always be. Genesis explains the process and order of the appearance of living things on the earth, from inanimate to animate.

6. Origin of man

Genesis provides the true answer as to the origin of man. Universal observation states that complex things tend to decay and become disorganized but in the face of this, evolutionists try to explain that in the midst of this universal experience, the most complex and orderly creature, man, has actually achieved the reverse of this trend and has come from decay and disorder to become complex and orderly.

Genesis explains the origin of man as a perfectly complex and orderly being at his creation and then joining the creation in its eventual demise, and also gives the reason why.

7. Origin of marriage

Again, Genesis records the universal and stable institution of marriage and the home in a monogamous, patriarchal, and stable society. Polygamy, infanticide, adultery, pedophilia, divorce, and homosexuality all come later as this original model began to disintegrate.

8. Origin of evil

The cause-and-effect model is demonstrated in Genesis showing how evil not only entered the world (a concession to free-will) but also how it caused the ultimate degeneration of a world originally created as perfect. Genesis not only explains the origin of decay through evil but introduces God's ultimate plan to deal with the evil in the world.

9. Origin of language

The gulf between the chattering of animals and the abstract, symbolic systems of man is completely unbridgeable by the evolutionary process. You can teach an animal to mimic sound, repeat conditioned responses but you cannot have him give an opinion or tell time. Genesis accounts not only for language in general but also national languages in particular.

10. Origin of government

Genesis gives the account of the development of the orderly maintenance of society. It refers to every stage in this process: patriarchal, tribal, national, and global.

11. Origin of culture

Genesis describes the beginnings of the main entities which we now associate with organized culture: urbanization, agriculture, metallurgy, animal husbandry, music, writing, navigation, education, textiles, and ceramics.

12. Origin of nations

Scholars today recognize the unity of the human race. The problem is how distinct nations could develop from one race and language. Only the book of Genesis explains this in an adequate fashion.

13. Origin of religion

There are many different religions in the world but all share the idea that there must be an ultimate truth and direction in life. Genesis explains the origin of this characteristic of man's consciousness as well as the origin of true worship and the true God of all origins.

14. Origin of the chosen people

No other people (Jewish) have had such a long and sustained historical background. Genesis gives the origin and purpose that this nation was to play in God's overall plan. The book of Genesis is the foundation of true history, science, and philosophy because it describes where we came from and how we arrived at where we are today.

GENESIS AND THE BIBLE

Not only does Genesis provide a foundation for our understanding of the created world and society but it is also a foundational book for the understanding of the rest of the Bible.

I do not state that as just a personal opinion but the Bible also makes this point:

- People like Adam, Noah, Abraham, Jacob, are continually referred to throughout the rest of the Bible. Without Genesis we would not know their role or purpose in God's plan.
- There are over 200 quotations or allusions to Genesis found in the New Testament.
- Every one of the New Testament authors refers to a passage in Genesis 1 to 11.
- Jesus refers to Genesis 1 to 11 at least six different times.

I say this because there is a great effort in the world, and sometimes by some in the church to mythologize the book of Genesis, especially the parts dealing with creation.

Genesis was written as a sober and fact-based history of the origin of the world and man. When we try to reduce any part of it to myth or allegory we undermine our faith since the foundation of our faith begins in Genesis (II Timothy 3:16).

These dates mark the time when certain scientific discoveries have been made. Next to these you will find the Bible verses where these discoveries are mentioned in detail centuries before being discovered by scientists.

| SCIENTIFIC FACTS OR PRINCIPLE | DATE OF DISCOVERY | BIBLICAL LOCATION |
|--|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Taxonomical classifications of matter 1. Time - 2. Energy - 3. Force - 4. Space - 5. Mass | 1735 | Gen. 1 |
| Oceans lie in one bed | | Gen.1:9 |
| Both man and woman possess seed of life | 17 th century | Gen. 3:15 & 22:18 |
| Most seaworthy ship design is 30:5:3 | 1860 | Gen. 6 |
| Infinite number of stars | 1940 | Gen. 15:5 |
| Certain animals carry diseases harmful to man | 16 th century | Lev. 11 |
| Early diagnosis of leprosy | 17 th century | Lev. 13:1-9 |
| Quarantine for disease control | 17 th century | Lev. 13:45-47 |
| Blood of animals carries disease | 17 th century | Lev. 17:13 |
| Blood necessary for survival of life | 19 th century | Lev. 17:11 / Deut. 12:23 |
| There is a place void of stars in the north | 19 th century | Job 26:7 |
| Earth is held in place by invisible forces | 1650 | Job 26:7 |
| Air has weight | 16 th century | Job 28:25 |
| Light is a particle (has mass, a photon) | 1932 | Job 38:19 |
| Radio astronomy (stars give off signals) | 1945 | Job 38:7 |
| Oceans contain freshwater springs | 1920 | Job 38:16 |
| Snow has material value | 1905, 1966 | Job 38:22 |
| Using electricity to carry sound | | Job 28:35 |
| Arcturus and other stars move through space | 19 th century | Job 38:32 |
| Oceans have natural paths in them - Matthew Fontaine Murray | 1854 | Psalms 8:8 |
| Moon gives no light | | Psalms 28:37 |
| Water cycle | 17 th century | Eccl. 1:7 |
| Dust is important for survival | 1935 | Isa. 40:12 |
| The earth is round | 15 th century | Isa. 40:22 / Prov. 8:27 |
| Day and night occur simultaneously on earth | 15 th century | Lk. 17:31-34 |
| Earth rotates on axis | | James 1:17 |

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Discuss the concept of inspiration and how Genesis supports this concept.
2. Review each of the following origins found in Genesis and be prepared to discuss its importance to man's understanding of God and His role with humanity. Origins of:
 - The universe
 - The earth and all its elements
 - Life in the form of plants and animals
 - Man
 - Marriage
 - Evil
 - Language
 - Culture, Government and nations
 - Religion
 - God's chosen people
3. Provide examples of how Genesis impacts all of scripture.
4. How can you use this lesson to grow spiritually and help others come into a relationship with Jesus?

2.

Authorship and Division

In the last chapter I introduced our study of Genesis and made two basic points:

1. Genesis is an inspired book. Jesus and all the writers of the New Testament refer to it in these terms.
2. Genesis is important because it is the book that explains the origin of the key elements in our lives: the universe; evil; family; religion; society; culture, etc.

Now we will look at the author, manner of writing and division of Genesis.

AUTHORSHIP

The main problem here of course, is how does one write an account that describes things that happened not only before you were born but before anyone was born?

There are three main explanations as to the author of Genesis.

1. A group of writers after Moses

This is the most liberal view held by "higher critics" (a term to differentiate these theologians from "textual scholars" who try to determine the meaning of the text from studying only the old texts). Higher critics create their interpretation by studying the meaning in the context of the literature, religion and social customs of all the peoples that existed in that era. They believe that the Bible is a compilation or a

reflection of the influences of the society it was originally written in (a type of literature).

For example, the flood was not the flood but the Jewish people's interpretation of a story or myth written about in other cultures at that time. Of course, they do not accept that maybe other cultures wrote about it because it really happened and the story in the Bible is the authentic account.

The point is that many higher critics say that Genesis is a compilation of old legends, stories, and traditions verbally handed down and compiled by different scribes between 700 and 400 BC. Moses lived around 1500 BC. They maintain that scribes put Moses' name on the book to give it some authority and authenticity.

This is called the "Documentary Hypothesis" and was originally formulated because they were convinced that Genesis could not have been written so early (1500 BC and before) because writing was unknown in his day. They were influenced by the idea of man's development according to an evolutionary timetable.

This theory was proven false by archeologists who demonstrated that writing was widely practiced in Moses' time and before.

“ Writing appears 5000-6000 years ago in Egypt, Mesopotamia and Indus Valley.
- **R. Linton, Anthropologist**

These critics also suggested that the idea of monotheism and high culture as was demonstrated by Moses was created by writers much later on because this development was non-existent 2000 years before Christ.

“ Again, archeologists have confirmed every fact and detail that the Bible puts forth, especially for the times that Moses lived and wrote about.”
- **Dr. N. Glueck, Archeologist**

So the first theory, the scribes who wrote it in the 7-4th century B.C. and put Moses' name on it, has largely been refuted by scholars today.

2. Moses as the Author

A more traditional view has been that Moses wrote Genesis, as well as the other books of the Pentateuch (first 5 books of the Bible). Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy are easy to explain, he lived through those times. How did he get the info for a period before he lived? There are three possibilities:

- A. He received it by direct revelation from God and was directed by the Holy Spirit in recording it.
- B. He received the information from oral tradition (which was the manner history was transmitted in those days) and guided by the Holy Spirit, he recorded and organized these into a book.
- C. He collected actual written records of the past and organized them into a book under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

All of these methods are certainly possible without violating any principles of inspiration found in the Bible. However, the direct revelation method is to be questioned because visions from the Lord usually have to do with future prophecies, not recording the past. Also, the direct revelatory method is not normally used to give specific laws and instructions (the 10 Commandments). The book of Genesis is mostly a descriptive narrative of the past.

Although possible, the direct revelatory method is not the way God provided for other authors of other books in the Bible.

3. Moses as Compiler and Editor

The evidence suggests that although Moses himself wrote the books of Exodus to Deuteronomy, he compiled and edited earlier written records preserved from the patriarchs. This would mean that Adam, Noah, Shem, Terah, etc., each a patriarch in his own era recorded events in his time and handed them down to the next generation to be preserved and added

to for historical purposes. Modern scholarship balks at this idea because it goes against the evolutionary idea that man developed from lower to higher forms and so did not record early history (monkeys cannot write).

Remember, however, that the Bible puts forth a completely opposite idea of history where man begins as an intelligent being and moves forward into a continuous cycle of decline and rescue until Jesus brings a complete salvation. In this model it is perfectly logical for early man to record and preserve his history and pass it on to future generations.

The patriarchal records were preserved and Moses collected these and edited them under the guidance of the Holy Spirit in order to produce the book of Genesis which contains the recorded history of early man. We can accept method two or three and respect the Bible's teaching on inspiration but I think method three is more in keeping with the way God worked in similar circumstances with other Bible writers.

DIVISION OF GENESIS

The book itself is very long with 50 chapters and can be divided in a variety of ways.

1. Overview division

Chapters 1 to 11 – God and the world He made. Reviews the creation of the world and its destruction and the subsequent establishment of the nations. This gives us a basis for understanding where we came from and how we got to where we are.

Chapters 12 to 50 – God and the chosen people. Ignores the broad picture and focuses on one man and one nation as well as God's plan to save all mankind through them.

2. Generational division

I said before that Moses may have used the records from the patriarchs in order to compile this book. There is some evidence of this from the way Genesis is put together. It is possible to recognize the divisions of these

original documents because each contains the key phrase, "These are the generations of..." The word generations comes from the same word that can be translated "origins" thus "...records of the origins of so and so."

If this is so, then Genesis is naturally divided by 10 generations given by Moses himself in the book:

1. Generations of heaven and earth (1:1 – 2:4).
 - Written by Adam or given to Adam by God.
2. The book of Generations of Adam (2:4b – 5:1).
 - Note the use of the word book which suggests these were recorded works and not just oral traditions
3. Generations of Noah (5:1 – 6:9).
 - Noah had known all the patriarchs except Adam, Seth and Enoch and so writes about actual history he lived.
4. Generations of the sons of Noah (6:9 – 10:1).
 - Noah's sons recorded the flood and its aftermath.
5. Generations of Shem (10:1 – 11:10).
 - Shem, Noah's son, lived 500 years after the flood and continued recording this period of history.
6. Generations of Terah (11:10 – 11:27).
 - Short but important because it gives the genealogy between Noah and Abraham. Where history turns from the world to specific Jewish history.
7. Generations of Isaac (11:27 – 25:11).
 - Isaac records the life and times of his father Abraham.
8. Generations of Ishmael (25:12 – 25:18).
 - Jacob records his half-brother's line (Arab tribes).
9. Generations of Jacob (25:19 – 37:1).
 - Jacob records his father and his own life events here.
10. Generations of the sons of Jacob (37:2 – Exodus 1:1).

- These were recorded by unknown authors and compiled by Moses who wove them into a final chapter which smoothly led to the beginning of his own eyewitness record which begins, "Now these are the records of the children of Israel."

There is not hard and fast proof that this is the way the book of Genesis was put together but this explanation does not violate any Bible principle and follows the information given in Genesis as to how it came into being. (The only information we have is the information in Genesis.)

What confirms the idea that Genesis is an inspired work is that Jesus Himself refers to Moses as an authority and inspired writer (Luke 24:27,44) and He and other writers use Genesis as an inspired source. If Jesus says it is inspired, then that is the final proof for me. To deny Genesis is to deny Jesus.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Explain the difference between "higher critics" and "textual scholars" and state why higher criticism is the weaker of the two methods for interpreting scripture.
2. Summarize the three theories for the authorship of Genesis and defend why Moses is the author.
3. Summarize the two overview divisions of Genesis: Chapters 1-11 and Chapters 12-50.
4. Explain the generational division of Genesis.
5. What is the key point from each of the following references of Genesis by Jesus and their significance?
 - Matthew 19:4-5; Mark 10:6-7
 - Matthew 23:35; Luke 11:51
 - Matthew 24:37-39
 - Mark 13:19
 - John 8:44
6. How can you use this lesson to grow spiritually and help others come into a relationship with Jesus?

3.

The Foundational Verse of the Bible

GENESIS 1:1

So far in our study of Genesis we have reviewed the inspiration of Genesis, that it is from God; the nature of the book, a book of origins; the author, Moses using previously recorded history; the divisions of the book:

- Chapters 1-11 as history of the world from creation and chapters 12-50 as the history of one nation in that world.
- 10 generations beginning with Adam and ending with the sons of Jacob recording, preserving and handing down their records which were compiled and edited by Moses under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Now we will pass into the actual text of the book.

Genesis 1:1, Foundational Verse

In the beginning God created the heavens
and the earth.
- Genesis 1:1

If Genesis is the foundational book of the Bible, then verse 1 of Genesis is the foundational verse of Genesis. The Bible is the most produced book in history, the most read book in history, therefore verse 1, where most

people begin to read even if they do not finish, is the most read verse in the Bible, in history, and in the world.

Henry Morris, in the resource book for this course
(*The Genesis Record, Baker Books, 2009*) says,

“...if a person really believes Genesis 1:1, he will not find it difficult to believe anything else recorded in the Bible.
(p. 37)

This verse does not try to prove the existence of God, it merely assumes it. Of course, it was written before any disbelief occurred, before any false system of belief to reject God was developed so it does not attempt to prove a self-evident fact.

However, this verse does contain the information necessary to refute all of man's subsequent false ideas about God and the creation. It is as if God knew what man would ultimately think up to deny God and so in the very first verse God preempts any possible false idea about Himself.

Here are seven main philosophies refuted by this verse alone:

- **Atheism says there is no God.**
 - Genesis 1:1 says that **God** created the heavens and the earth.
- **Pantheism says that everything is God.** The trees, rivers, stars, etc. Pantheism is a form of thinking where people deify nature or give nature a force of its own.
 - Genesis 1:1 says that God is separate from His creation, He is not part of it. He existed first and then He created the world. He is before and after it.
- **Polytheism teaches a multiplicity of gods.** The Greeks, Romans and nearly every ancient people as well as primitive peoples today (Africa, S.A., East) are polytheists.
 - Genesis 1:1 says that only **one** God created all things.

- **Materialism is the basis for most modern thinking.** It says that matter is eternal and that matter is the only thing that exists. Communism was based on materialism with its main idea being how to distribute material wealth equally.
 - Genesis 1:1 says that matter had a beginning. At some point it did not exist and then God brought it into existence.

- **Dualism**, an ancient idea developed into different systems by Plato and later Descartes. Basically, it says that there are two powers at work in the universe (good and evil) and the interaction between these two is responsible for all of what we see. (Hinduism also explains the beginning of the world as the interaction of two entities).
 - Genesis 1:1 states that all that we see was created by only **one** power, God. The Bible accounts for evil but evil is never at the same level as God. There is only one supreme power at work according to Genesis and it was manifested at the very beginning.

- **Humanism** teaches that man is the ultimate reality. There is nothing higher or nobler than man. Many good works done to benefit mankind are done by those who hold to this philosophy.
 - Genesis 1:1 refutes this idea because it teaches that God, not man, is the ultimate reality since God was here before man and is the creator of man.

- **Evolution**, our most prevalent idea today, says that time and chance working on eternal matter is responsible for the universe.
 - Genesis 1:1 says that in the beginning (specific time), God (not chance) created (not evolved) the heavens and the earth.

These and other theories (naturalism - all is matter, deism - God not involved, agnosticism - we cannot know, monism - genesis without God - all comes from one substance, determinism - fate, pragmatism - what works is what is good, nihilism - might makes right) are all different ways

to deny the simple truth of Genesis 1:1 and replace it with a man-made idea.

THE WORDS IN GENESIS 1:1

We will save the phrase "in the beginning" for later when we will discuss the age of the earth.

GOD – Hebrew term "*Elohim*" which stresses the majesty and omnipotence of God. It is a plural noun (gods) but used in a singular fashion in this verse. This immediately suggests the dynamic nature of God who is at the same time one yet more than one, somehow.

CREATED – refers to the unique work of God, never used in reference to humans. The word means to call into existence from nothing. Man "forms" or "fashions" but only God "creates". The whole system of faith rests here: either random particles which always existed, generated by themselves a more complex, orderly universe and then graduated to intelligent beings capable of applying and developing intelligence (the same matter that made a rock made you); or God created it. This is the choice we have.

HEAVEN – This does not refer to the stars and planets but to the space where these are situated. When we refer to our existence we talk about the "space – mass – time" universe, the basic components of our existence. This "heaven" would refer to the space component since the time component has been introduced (in the beginning) and the mass element is about to follow. No word is used in the Bible to express this idea of space and so the term "heaven" is used, as in the idea of expanse or universe.

EARTH – Again there is no word in the Bible that refers to "matter" so Moses uses the term earth (land) which describes the creation of the next basic component which is matter (not yet shaped or formed but now in existence).

IN THE BEGINNING – I have said that the universe is a combination of the elements of space, matter and time. Science teaches that each of these elements is necessary for the universe to have a meaningful existence:

- If there is space and time but no matter then the universe is empty, nothing happens.
- If there is matter (which includes energy) and time but no space, there is no movement, just one big mass. Space is needed.

Time is the third and most important component because it permits perception of the matter and space. Genesis 1:1 says that the element of time was called into existence along with space and matter to comprise the time-space-matter continuum which we call the universe.

Now, Genesis says that this time-space-matter component was not yet formed. The next verses go on to explain how God fashioned the raw materials of creation into the universe that we now see.

Some authors say that verse 1 is the title of Genesis or a summary of events but as we said before, the summary of Genesis 1 is given in 2:4,

...these are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created.

Also, all the other sections of Genesis have no titles, only these summary statements showing the end of a particular generation.

So, the first act of the first day of creation was the bringing forth the building blocks of the universe, the time-space-matter elements.

If you were translating Genesis 1:1 into modern scientific English, you could say,

THE TRANSCENDENT, OMNIPOTENT GODHEAD CALLED INTO EXISTENCE THE TIME-SPACE-MATTER UNIVERSE.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Explain the concept of a foundation and how Genesis 1:1 fulfills this role.
2. Review each of the philosophies below and discuss how Genesis 1:1 refutes them.
 - Atheism
 - Pantheism
 - Polytheism
 - Materialism
 - Dualism
 - Humanism
 - Evolution
3. Break down each word from Genesis 1:1 into its respective meaning and state the importance of the complete sentence.
 - God
 - Created
 - Heaven
 - Earth
 - In the beginning
4. Explain how Genesis 1:1 describes the matter, time, and space components.
5. What is the relationship between Genesis 1:1 and Genesis 2:4?
6. How can you use this lesson to grow spiritually and help others come into a relationship with Jesus?

4.

Old Earth vs. Young Earth

In our last chapter we discussed Genesis 1:1 and reviewed the idea that the Bible describes, in this first verse, the creation of the time-space-matter continuum that is our universe.

The two main points about this verse were:

1. Scientists and philosophers have described our universe as a "thing" which is comprised, in its essence, of three elements, time, space and matter (which includes energy). No one disputes this, neither does the Bible. As a matter of fact, the book of Genesis establishes this idea by describing these very elements as the first raw materials God created from which He formed the universe as we now know it. The amazing thing is that Genesis was written long before these concepts were described or analyzed by man and yet in perfect harmony with what humans have discovered about the universe thousands of years later.
2. In the first verse of the bible God provides the information to refute major ideological errors that crept up thousands of years after the events and writing of Genesis.

Genesis 1:1 is not only the foundation of Genesis and the Bible, it is the foundation for our thinking and perception of God, the universe, as well as mankind.

Now we will review some ideas as to the time of creation and the beginning of the formation of the universe as we know it.

THE AGE OF THE EARTH

There are two positions you can take when trying to determine the age of the earth:

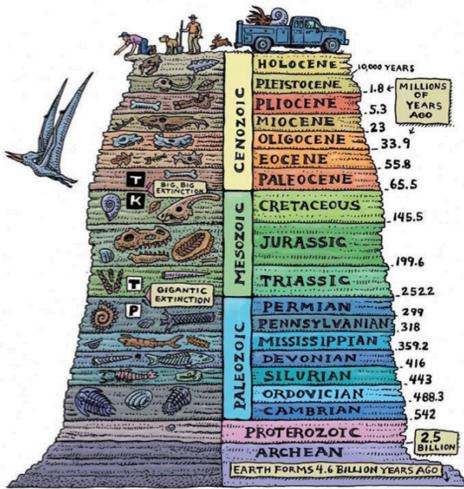
- A. **OLD** - millions to billions of years
- B. **YOUNG** - 5,000 to 10,000 years

1. The very old view of the earth is held mainly by evolutionists because they believe that matter is eternal, that matter was affected in some way ("big bang", etc.) and through time (lots of time, millions of years) and chance, the earth evolved to become what it is. It is important to note that they begin with this theory and then line up evidence to prove it. Usually in science you develop theory based on the evidence gathered.

The basis of their proof is expressed in the geological chart created to represent the development of the earth throughout the ages. (This is an artist's rendition of the evolutionary model, not how the earth really is).

They say that life began with simple creatures who died and left fossil (bone or imprint records in rocks) records, and as life grew more complex, more complex fossils were found in succeeding layers of rock. For example, bottom layer of rock (900M years) has very simple creatures (Archeozoic Period) and top layer of rock (10M years) has very complex creatures, like man (Cenozoic Period).

The diagram shown here is not based on what has actually been found anywhere on earth. No clear record that reflects this picture has ever been found by geologists anywhere on earth.



Time scale by Ray Troll,
"Cruisin' the Fossil Freeway."

The problem is that this picture, used in schools, is the image used to describe the evolutionary model but has not been proven by actual evidence in the earth itself.

What happens is that when fossils are found they are dated according to the theory that the bottom layer is 900M+ years old and the top layer is 10M+ years old.

There is no way to accurately date a fossil beyond 60,000 years! No clock, no record. If scientists find a bone, fragment, or fossil record, they can, through the carbon dating process, tell if it is 100, 500, 1000 years old up to 60,000 years but cannot accurately tell beyond this. So what they do is put anything beyond 60,000 years old into the category artificially created by the evolutionary model and arbitrarily give it an old date. Something could just as well be 7,000 years old as 7 million years old, there is no accurate way to tell beyond 60,000 years old (in theory). Carbon dating is not an exact measurement.

The problem with the "old age" theory of the earth is that there are several inconsistencies both theoretically and observationally:

- A. For the earth to be one billion years old or more and for evolution to be the system by which everything came to be what it is, we have to accept as true several theories:
1. Something comes from nothing. This is a problem because, as I have said before, nothing comes from nothing. Scientists universally agree on this and so do philosophers and most people as well. If this is so why would we accept this idea as the basis for the origin of our existence?
 2. Matter is eternal. If it did not create itself, then it was always there! Simple observation demonstrates that matter is **not** eternal. Fire does use up energy. We are becoming less than we were. Stars burn up. If things have an end, they must also have a beginning, so matter is not eternal in nature, it came from somewhere.
 3. Unlimited time and random selection is the method by which simple things (1 cell creatures) became complex things like human beings. Scientists tell us that there is a point in mathematical probability (like 1 chance in X millions) that constitutes the impossible. In other words when it is one chance in a billion, then that is the same thing as being impossible. The odds that this universe was created by time and chance are so great that they cannot be expressed in numbers, which means **impossible**.
- B. For the earth to be one billion years old and for the evolutionary system to be the way it happened also presents some observational problems.
1. The geological record does not match the facts. Geologists are continually finding complex creatures at the rock levels where only simple creatures should be located according to their chart.
 - Every form of complex creature has been found in the lowest layers. The best example is with dinosaurs who were supposed to have lived 300 M years before man

according to the diagram. But the most famous contradiction of this were the tracks found in the Paluxy River in Texas where in 1908 dinosaur tracks were found right next to human footprints. These were authenticated in 1938 by Dr. Roland T. Bird of the American Museum of Natural History.

- In addition to these, there have been "human" footprints, carvings, tools and pottery found in rock layers supposedly 200 to 500 M years before man was evolved.
2. If evolution is true then there should be a fossil record showing how simple creatures transformed from one species to more complex species. These "links" have never been found. People talk about "the" missing link but there are millions of "links" that need to be there in order for the chain from one species to the other to be complete. They have not found any of these links.
- For example, creatures in a pond evolved from one to another. You can have a pond with snails and worms at the bottom... and fish in the water, ducks above water, frogs on the shore and dogs and cats nearby. A sudden dump of mud freezes everything in place (i.e. Noah's flood). 1,000 years later you examine the fossils and you can assume that the simple creatures "evolved" into the more complex creatures or they coexisted in different environments.
 - All creatures existed simultaneously in common environment.

Evolution and the old earth theory is good on paper but the evidence in the earth itself (geological findings) and logical thinking do not support it. It is the alternative answer for the origins of the universe for many people who refuse to believe in God.

2. The young earth theory has many less obstacles and more proofs to support it.

- A. There are no philosophical problems with a young created earth. That an all-powerful and wise being created the universe which reflects His complexity and wisdom is logical and possible. As a matter of fact, the existence of an eternal God creating the earth can logically be demonstrated in a variety of ways (i.e. Moral argument, First Cause argument).
- B. The earth itself presents no observational contradictions to this model.
1. Complex forms of life appear simultaneously at the earliest parts and all throughout the geological evidence in the earth according to the creation model.
 2. There are no links from one form of life to another just like creation describes, only the same type of man from the beginning until now. Man is the same from the beginning until now, monkeys are the same and there are no links that go from one to the other. (There is a sort of evolution within a species, type of monkey to another, but not from a species to a different species – i.e. monkey to man).
 3. There are over 70 ways to "date" the earth using various disciplines: chemical, anthropological, archaeological, etc. and all these methods suggest a young vs. an old earth. Even carbon dating used by evolutionists can only date as far back as 60,000 years, beyond this is a guess.
 4. The Bible itself contains genealogical records that lists patriarchs from the first man until Moses until Christ that contain no more than 8,000 years of history (taking into account different gaps and calendar discrepancies). Therefore, a young earth model of about 10,000 years is supported by logic, by observation and by revelation.

SUMMARY

The problem with accepting the young earth model (10,000 years) which was the model supported by both science and religion until the 20th century, is that the theory of evolution has seriously influenced the world in the last 100 years.

This theory has found its way into schools and government and has undermined the belief in the Bible. In the last 10 years it has begun to crumble as evidence has built up to contradict and destroy it but the damage to faith has been great and will take time to undo. Libraries are full of books about evolution.

Next time, we will see how some have tried to reconcile Genesis 1 with evolution.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Describe the "old earth view" and summarize the threats to the validity of this view.
2. Describe the "young earth view" and summarize why this is a valid view.
3. How can you use this lesson to grow spiritually and help others come into a relationship with Jesus?

5.

The Gap Theory in Creationism

GENESIS 1:2

In the previous chapter we talked about the "age" of the earth (universe) and said that there were only two models to choose from:

1. Old earth - Millions to Billions of years - The idea here is that matter is eternal or created itself billions of years ago and through a process of evolution has become what it is today. One "proof" for this model is the fossil record which has simple life forms in deep rock layers and more complex (evolved) life forms found in more recent layers of rocks. The problems with the old earth model:

- A. Theoretical basis is flawed (Eternity of matter, spontaneous creation)
- B. Geological findings contradict theory (Complex fossils found at every layer).

2. New earth - 5,000 to 10,000 years - The earth (universe) is just five days older than man. An all-powerful being created the universe and earth at the beginning of time, 5 to 10 thousand years ago. There are several proofs for this model:

- A. Philosophical arguments (First Cause argument; Moral argument; Intelligent Design argument now based on complexity).
- B. Matches all archaeological and geological findings.
- C. Revelation

By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible.

- Hebrews 11:3

We accept the young earth model because this is the one given to us in Genesis, the book we are presently studying. There are some, however, who try to combine the Biblical account with the evolutionary model and the theories they come up with are the subject for this lesson.

THE "GAP THEORY"

One such theory is the "gap theory". This theory asserts that there is a tremendous time gap allowed for between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2. The gap theory runs like this:

1. God created the world (all of it) in Genesis 1:1.
2. Satan rebelled against God and for this reason there was a tremendous cataclysm that destroyed the world and left it void and blank. This would explain the billions of years of fossils piling up in the rock and the aging of the earth to accommodate such "ancient" fossils. Verse 2 would be the verse that describes the earth in the aftermath of the great destruction of the earth.
3. God re-creates the earth in six literal days as described in verses 3 to 31. This theory also known as the ruin and reconstruction theory or "pre-Adamic cataclysm" theory was first proposed by Thomas Chalmers in the nineteenth century and popularized by the notes in the Scofield Bible.

The main purpose of the theory was to harmonize the six days of creation with the new science of geology which was developing the geological timetable in Chalmers' day. By introducing the "gap" you could have it both ways: 6 days of creation and billions of years for the fossil record to develop.

There are several problems with this theory:

1. Scientific

If there was a cataclysm (world-wide destruction) that blew everything up so as to leave the earth dark and void, it would destroy any evidence of life there as well. Fossil records are based on the assumption that there has been no change in the earth's past. Just a steady cycle of life and death enabling us to "read" the story of the past in the earth. If something cataclysmic happened there would be a "record" of it and (aside from the flood) there is no record of any cataclysm. No geologist, for example, believes in the "gap" theory.

2. Biblical

If you accept the gap theory then you accept the fossil record as well. If you accept the fossil record then you say that there is a cycle of life and death that is present billions of years before Adam came on the scene and this is not theologically possible.

Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned
- Romans 5:12

For since by a man *came* death, by a man also *came* the resurrection of the dead.
- I Corinthians 15:21

The Bible says that death came into the world (for both man and beast) only when Adam brought sin into the world.

Another point is that if death existed before Satan's sin or Adam's sin then the one responsible for it is God and that is impossible, sin brings death, not God:

For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.
- Romans 6:23

As Christians we need to carefully read what the Bible says and formulate our models on what it says without trying to somehow match what it teaches to what the world says. The world has been wrong many of times before.

EXEGESIS - GENESIS 1:2

And the earth was...

The conjunction "and" simply denotes a sequence of events that flow one from the other. They could have used another construction if they wanted a "gap" there. On the first day (*In the beginning*) God creates space (*heavens*) and matter (*earth*). Now Moses focuses on the matter and describes its condition when it was originally formed. Any other conclusion is "read" into it in order to harmonize it with a man-made theory.

...formless and void...

Gap theory people translate this as the earth was ruined (like after a nuclear holocaust). But in harmony with the first verse, this verse simply builds on the ideas already presented: the basic space and matter were created. Verse 2 comments on the condition of the matter at this time: it had no shape or form, and it was empty, without inhabitants. The raw materials were there, the potential was there but had not yet been shaped into what we recognize as the earth and the universe yet.

...darkness was on the face (surface) of the deep...

No form, no motion, no light. This phrase is also a descriptive one where the author is not describing what God is doing but rather giving a description of the universe as the initial elements of time, space and matter that have been created. The earth was without form, the oceans had no boundaries, there was no light since the matter had not yet been energized.

Henry Morris suggests that "...elements of matter and molecules of water were present, but not yet energized." (p. 51) It was a kind of formless, dark soup with no sound, shape or form.

█ ...the Spirit of God moved over the surface of the waters...

The name for God here (*Elohim*) suggests that God is both unity and plurality, and the triune nature of the universe (time, space, matter) reflects the triune nature of God. Here we see a particular person of the Godhead, the Holy Spirit, make a particular action.

Someone asked how many Spirits were at creation and I would say three (Father, Son, Holy Spirit) which make up the single Godhead or God. It is not one spirit with three personalities, but three individual spirits within one Godhead.

The last few words are comments on the state of what had been created, with this phrase we have a description of what God in the person of the Holy Spirit now does to the materials He has created.

The term "move" is only used three times in the Old Testament (*Rachaph*) and it means to shake or flutter. The image is one of a mother hen fluttering over her chicks. The idea is that of a rapid back and forth action. The best modern description would be "to vibrate."

☞ If the earth is to be energized, there needs to be an energizer. If it is to be set into motion there needs to be a prime mover.

- Henry Morris

The Genesis Record, Baker Books, 2009 - page 52

It is interesting to note that the transmission of energy in the universe is in the form of waves (light waves, heat waves, sound waves, etc.) and that Genesis 1:2 says that once the raw material was formed it was energized and brought into its present form by a Divine vibration initiated by the Holy Spirit. Energy cannot create itself (formless and void) so the first impartation of energy to the universe was provided by the vibrating movement of the eternal and all-powerful Spirit of God.

SUMMARY

In Genesis 1:1-2 we have God creating the elements of the universe (time, space, matter) and then energizing these through the vibrating of the Holy Spirit in order to bring them into shape and movement.

A person can "not believe" this but cannot say that if there is a God this is not a logical and scientifically correct way to bring the universe into being. There must be matter before movement.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Summarize the main elements of the Gap theory.
2. Summarize the main problems with the Gap Theory.
3. Explain how Genesis 1:2 shows that God's creative activities were not disrupted by a rebellion by Satan as described by the Gap Theory.
4. How can you use this lesson to grow spiritually and help others come into a relationship with Jesus?

6.

The Day/Age Theory of Creation

GENESIS 1:3-5

In our discussion of the act of creation we have seen that the order of events as described in Genesis follows a certain chronology:

1. God exists, is eternal, has no beginning
 - He is all powerful, knowledgeable, loving.
 - He has the ability to create, not just fashion or form.

2. God creates the world
 - He brings into existence the time-space-matter elements. These are without form, light or energy. First acts on the first day.

 - Angels are created. They are not mentioned here but in Job 38:4-7 it says they were present at the laying of the foundation of the earth. Their purpose was to minister to people (Hebrews 1:14). Somewhere between the creation of the basic elements and the forming of the finished earth, angels were created (Psalm 104:3-4).

 - Next, God fashions these elements into the universe that we now recognize as our world, through the energizing power of the Holy Spirit. This creative process will be done in a total of six days.

This scenario has been rejected by atheists and agnostics (doubters) who propose that the way that the world came to be as it was by a system of random selection over a period of billions of years within a context where matter is eternal.

The creation account has also been altered by those who want to reconcile evolution with Genesis. One such theory discussed in the previous chapter was the "gap theory." It says that God created the world and because of Satan's rebellion it was destroyed. The earth stayed empty for billions of years (the "gap" is here accounting for fossils, etc.). Then God re-created the world in six days according to Genesis 1:2-ff.

The problem here is if God destroyed the world there would be a record of it in the geological tables and there is not. Also, this would mean that there was sin in the world (the physical world) before Adam but the Bible says that sin came through Adam. Dead things representing the fossil record point to death, and sin is what brings death, so if there are fossils before Adam that means there is sin and death in the world before him, and this contradicts the Bible that says that before Adam there was no sin and therefore no death.

The disobedience of angels is in the spirit world and not the physical universe.

Another theory that tries to reconcile evolution with creation is the "day-age" theory and this will be the first thing we will review in this lesson.

DAY/AGE THEORY

The day-age theory is something like the gap theory in that it tries to fit evolution and creation together in one piece. The day-age theory says that each day in Genesis is not a literal 24-hour day but rather an age (a geological age to be more specific).

This theory says that each day represents millions of years where, through the process of evolution, the world slowly became what is described as fully mature in Genesis.

This theory tries to reconcile Evolution and the Bible but there are problems:

1. The order of created events in Genesis is very different from the order found in the geological table used by evolutionists. The Geological Table has species listed from simple to complex throughout ages. Creation has complex forms of life appearing at approximately the same time.
2. Like the gap theory, the day-age theory has death, and by conclusion, sin appearing in the physical world before Adam, and this contradicts other teaching in the Bible.
3. The grammar used in Genesis 1 supports literal days and not ages.

Although it is possible for the word "*YOM*" (Hebrew word for day) to mean an indefinite time, the context of Genesis does not permit this interpretation. *YOM* never means period although it may refer to an indefinite time (the day of the judges). It usually means day (24-hour period) or the daylight portion of the day. It is never used in the "indefinite time period" unless its literal one-day meaning is clearly shown to not be used.

If a person wanted to express the idea of long geological ages, he could have done it in much clearer and concise language. The normal and contextual way of interpreting Genesis 1 is to read 24-hour days. To do otherwise is to stretch the meaning to fit the theory. There is no need to add meaning, it just means what it says.

³ Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. ⁴ God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. ⁵ God called the light day, and the darkness He called night. And there was evening and there was morning, one day.

- Genesis 1:3-5

The next event recorded is the creation of light. In the same way that Genesis separates the creation of the basic elements from the final form

(i.e. time-space-matter, energized into form and movement) the creation of light follows the same pattern.

Three things are happening in these verses:

1. Light (elements for light) is created

When the Holy Spirit moved over the surface, the gravitational forces were activated and He brought form and motion to initially static and formless matter. In the same way the electromagnetic forces were activated by the Word when God called light out of darkness.

Just like energy cannot produce itself, light cannot produce itself. The Holy Spirit moved to energize the world, the Word calls light (all forms of electromagnetism) to complete the energizing of the universe.

The sun, a source of light, and energy, will be created later on but for now the earth spins and goes through a light and dark sequence provided by God.

2. The tri-une nature of God is revealed

The Father is the source of all things (the elements); the Holy Spirit is the energizer of all things; the Word is the revealer of all things (light).

The Father is the source of our salvation, He sends the Word; the Word made flesh (Jesus) reveals the Father and completes the plan of salvation; the Holy Spirit energizes the Son (miracles and resurrection) and the disciples (gifts and resurrection).

3. The day and night cycle is established

This has been the cycle of life from the beginning. Light is day when work is done when things are seen. Even God did not add any new dimensions during the darkness. It was necessary to be specific here because many pagan religions in the future would have "creation" histories that dealt with eons or ages during which the world developed. By clearly

establishing 24 hour or natural day and night boundaries, God indicates that all of what He did was done in the normal cycle of day and night.

God did not abolish darkness (that will come in the new heavens and the new earth). He merely separated it from light or day.

SUMMARY – DAY 1

1. God created the basic matter of the universe.
2. He creates angels and judges the ones who fall.
3. He energizes matter to give it form and motion.
4. He creates the basis for light, electromagnetic spectrum.
5. He sets into motion the day and night cycle.

People reject this because it seems hard to believe that God could do it or that He could do it in a one-day period: they would rather believe it all took place by chance, or that God started it and then let it happen by chance.

However, Genesis tells us in rather plain language that this tremendous activity was all done in one day and night cycle and we are called to believe God's account, not man's account.

By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible.

- Hebrews 11:3

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Summarize the Day/Age theory and the problems associated with it.
2. Summarize the activities happening in Genesis 1:3-5.
3. How can you use this lesson to grow spiritually and help others come into a relationship with Jesus?

7.

Day #2 and #3

GENESIS 1:6-10

So far we have discussed the events of the first day of creation:

1. There has been a debate whether God created angels before He began to create the universe or if He did it on the first day. There is no way of knowing for sure. Here is what we do know:
 - A. Angels are created beings, they are spiritual in nature (Matthew 22:30).
 - B. They were present when the earth was being formed (Job 38:4-7).
 - C. Satan was cast down with other rebellious angels when they disobeyed God. We do not have information about what this disobedience was but since they were originally created to minister to man, perhaps it was a refusal to do this that sent them down and provoked Satan's hatred of man and subsequent temptation (II Peter 2:4). Another possibility is that they left their original positions (Jude 6), but we don't know why.

Previously, I said that they may have been created during this first day but as others have mentioned, there is equal evidence that they may have been created before this as well. Either way they were present when God created the universe on the first day.

2. God brings into existence the time-space-matter elements without form, energy, or light.

3. These are energized by the power of the Holy Spirit and take on form and energy.
4. God creates the basis for light which is the electromagnetic spectrum.
5. He sets into motion the dark and light cycle which has remained night and day which we continue to experience to this time.

We also discussed the idea that *YOM*, the Hebrew word for day means one day, one 24-hour period and not an age or indefinite period of time.

So this first day of creation, a night and day cycle, approximately 10,000 years ago is what Genesis describes as the beginning of our world, attacked and ridiculed by evolutionists and some scientists, but as their theories change to accommodate new findings (no "big bang", more than one "big bang"), our model (creation) remains constant withstanding all investigation and criticism throughout the ages.

DAY 2

⁶ Then God said, "Let there be an expanse in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters." ⁷ God made the expanse, and separated the waters which were below the expanse from the waters which were above the expanse; and it was so. ⁸ God called the expanse heaven. And there was evening and there was morning, a second day.
- Genesis 1:6-8

In simple terms we usually say that God created the sky on the second day. This is true but what is happening here is a feature of the pre-sin world which is no longer a part of our world today.

Vs. 6 – The term "expanse" means spread out or thinners. In verse 8 it says that He called this space "heaven." In the Bible the word heaven is used to describe three different places depending on context:

- A. The atmosphere, clouds, etc. (Jeremiah 4:25)
- B. The stars and planets, space (Isaiah 13:10)
- C. The "place" where God is, where His throne resides (Hebrews 9:24)

The term firmament is used in the same way (atmosphere or space) depending on the context. In this passage, the firmament or heaven, refers to the atmosphere.

At this point, God creates the unique atmosphere that permits life on earth and separates the two existing bands of water, one above and one below the atmosphere.

The waters under the firmament would be the water on and under the earth. The waters above the firmament would be a special water vapor canopy that would provide the unique environment that existed in the pre-flood world of Adam and Eve. Liquid water on the earth, gaseous atmosphere, and water vapor are above the atmosphere.

The point that many of us forget is that the world we live in now is very different from the world that God created. Not only different from a moral perspective but also different from an environmental perspective as well.

God has not yet formed the water on the earth into anything. He has established the earth's atmosphere and the vapor canopy which, according to Dr. H. Morris, would give the earth and its first inhabitants a special environment which would have special features:

1. It would maintain a uniform and warm temperature, like a greenhouse.
2. With uniform temperatures there would be no windstorms like tornadoes.
3. No rain except over bodies of water where evaporation occurs directly.
4. Proper temperature would permit proper humidity and moisture which would create lush vegetation and no desert.

5. The canopy would act as a filter for ultraviolet, cosmic and other destructive energies from space which are the source cause of cancers and other mutations that cause death.
6. Modern biomedical research has shown that higher barometric pressure created by such a water vapor canopy would promote better health and decrease the susceptibility to disease.

Note that this same water canopy which provided the earth with such advantages was later used by God to destroy the earth in the great flood. In Genesis 7:11, the Bible says that the water to flood the earth came from two sources: the flood gates of the deep (underground rivers) and the floodgates of the sky (the water canopy was dissolved).

Scientists tell us that if all the water from the present atmosphere were to descend on the earth, there would be enough to cover the entire earth with about one inch of water, not enough to cause the flood described in Genesis 7. However, if the band of water vapor surrounding the earth was dissolved, we now would have enough water to cause a world-wide flood and an explanation for the changes in the weather and environment that the world experiences today.

1. Very different temperatures.
2. Wild climates caused by massive air currents.
3. Rain and its problems.
4. Desert, droughts, etc.
5. The development of disease, mutations, and death through illness not caused directly by man.
6. Shortened lifespan to 75 years rather than the 700 to 1,000 years directly before the flood.

This is the end of day 2 with the creation of the atmosphere and separation of the water mass on earth and the water vapor canopy above the atmosphere.

DAY 3

⁹ Out of the ground the Lord God caused to grow every tree that is pleasing to the sight and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

¹⁰ Now a river flowed out of Eden to water the garden; and from there it divided and became four rivers.

- Genesis 1:9-10

I begin day number three because it naturally brings to a conclusion God's activity with the water properties of the earth. There is order in how God divides the elements to form creation:

1. Light from darkness on day 1.
2. Waters above from those below the heavens (atmosphere) on day 2.
3. Now, dry land from the waters below the atmosphere on day 3.

The language in these verses shows us that the composition of the land and seas were not at this time the same as it is today. The flood changed not only the atmosphere and weather, but also changed the arrangement of the canopy, atmosphere, seas, and land. The way God arranged these elements then was ideal for the promotion of human life.

LESSONS

We will stop here and continue with the next part of day 3 in the next chapter. Here are some lessons we can draw from these passages:

1. God knows what is best for us.

He carefully designed the world so we would not suffer from sinus headaches or cancer, etc. In this fallen world we should trust and obey Him to know what is best for us.

2. It is okay to pray about the weather.

God gave careful consideration to the matters of wind, rain, heat and cold. He has not changed and continues to have power over these. It is okay to praise Him for a beautiful morning and appeal to Him to control bad and damaging weather. Maybe we are not praying enough about it! Too much rain coming down may be happening because not enough prayers are going up!

3. Why doubt such an awesome God?

Look at what He does without effort. Why do we ever doubt His care or ability and willingness to help, save, or provide?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Summarize the main elements of Genesis creation account from Genesis 1:1-5.
2. Summarize the events of day 2 of the Genesis creation account (Genesis 1:6-8).
3. How does the world we live in today differ from the world at the time of creation?
4. Summarize the events of day 3 from the Genesis creation account (Genesis 1:9-10) and state the importance of these.
5. How can you use this lesson to grow spiritually and help others come into a relationship with Jesus?

8.

Day #3 and #4

GENESIS 1:11-19

So far we have reviewed the first three days of creation:

- **Day 1** – God brings into existence the time-space-matter elements. These are energized by the power of the Holy Spirit and take on form and energy. God sets into motion the dark and light cycle.
- **Day 2** – God separates the earth-based water from the water canopy above and creates the atmosphere in between. This system is the basis for the pre-sin environment which was without extreme temperatures or weather patterns.
- **Day 3** – God separates the water on earth from the land on earth.

We left off at this point during the third day of creation. Also, day was one dark and light cycle as we know it now. This is what the Hebrew word that was used means.

DAY 3 - CONTINUED

¹¹ Then God said, "Let the earth sprout vegetation, plants yielding seed, and fruit trees on the earth bearing fruit after their kind with seed in them"; and it was so. ¹² The earth brought forth vegetation, plants yielding seed after their kind, and trees bearing fruit with seed in them, after their kind; and

God saw that it was good. ¹³ There was evening and there was morning, a third day.

- Genesis 1:11-13

There is the division of land and water, light and dark, now God begins to cover the earth with vegetation in order to complete the work of the third day.

Some interesting features of this act of creation:

1. Genesis mentions the three main orders of plant life. There have been different divisions given by modern science but these three include the vegetation that exist:
 - Vegetation/grass. Ground spreading and covering types of vegetation.
 - Plants/herbs. Includes bushes, shrubs, and flowers.
 - Trees and large woody plants including fruit trees.
2. Moses also mentions "seed" and "kind" referring to the ability of vegetation to reproduce itself and not some other type. Modern research reinforces the idea that each organism has its own unique structure of DNA and can only specify the reproduction of that same kind. There are variations within each kind but there are no new kinds. There is horizontal variation (color, style, health, form) but no vertical change (plants cannot be bred to produce animals or vice versa. Evolution says that everything comes from a common ancestor but this passage as well as observation demonstrates that each living thing has its own seed (DNA) and it reproduces after its own kind (no new kinds only variations of the original).
3. The creation was done in one day but what was created was fully mature. The trees and plants as well as all other created things were made with their age built in. This explains the discrepancy in the "ages" observed by science. Something can take a certain

number of years to develop to full maturity under present terms and conditions but at the beginning God called these things into existence fully matured. Various resources in the earth already locked into the earth at creation.

With the creation of the vegetation world there is the close of the third day, again the context and grammar used refers to a single dark and light cycle of what we now measure as 24 hours.

DAY 4

¹⁴ Then God said, "Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens to separate the day from the night, and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years; ¹⁵ and let them be for lights in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth"; and it was so. ¹⁶ God made the two great lights, the greater light to govern the day, and the lesser light to govern the night; *He made* the stars also. ¹⁷ God placed them in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth, ¹⁸ and to govern the day and the night, and to separate the light from the darkness; and God saw that it was good. ¹⁹ There was evening and there was morning, a fourth day.
- Genesis 1:14-19

Note that on the first day God said, "Let there be light," and on the fourth day He said, "Let there be lights."

At first there is intrinsic light, the electromagnetic spectrum; then there are the givers of light (Hebrew *MA-OR*) or light generators. Logical order is followed. At first God produces light energy which sets the dark light cycle into motion, then He creates the mechanisms that will generate light in order to keep this cycle going.

Some ask, "How do we explain the problem of light rays taking millions of years to reach the earth and the idea of a young earth?" Answer: God created the light trail then created the source. Remember the concept of a mature earth where things that evolutionists say would take millions of years to happen gradually, are made in a moment by God at creation.

There are some problems in reconciling a young earth with movement and explosion of stars but the study of stars is not an exact science and we need to fold what we know about them into the creation account and not the other way around. There have been other unexplained things that seem to disprove the accuracy of the Genesis record but in time these were explained. For example, the mention of the Hittite people in Genesis 23:10. Until 1900 this reference was rejected by scholars and archeologists as mythical and people rejected Genesis because it supposedly contained false information. However once archeologists confirmed their historical existence based on their findings, the Bible account was vindicated.

These lights were placed in the expanse of the heavens, meaning in this context: space, not our atmosphere. Note some interesting features of this particular part of creation:

1. Both sun and moon were light givers but not light generators. The sun generates light, the moon reflects it. The idea is that the earth is the object of God's attention. These two bodies directly serve God's primary purpose with the earth, they are not some solar fluke.

2. The Bible attaches much more importance to the sun and moon than to the other stars mentioned even though these others are bigger in size and number. The importance is not based on size but how they fit into God's plan.

3. The stars were set in place as they are now. What we see now is what Adam saw when he looked up. There have been fluctuations and stars burning, "shooting stars" which are features of the heavens that God created but essentially what we have now is what God originally put into place.

4. The heavenly bodies serve various purposes:

- They govern the day and night. The cycle of dark and light is produced by the sun and moon and the light each projects upon the earth.

- They serve to glorify God.

¹ The heavens are telling of the glory of God;
And their expanse is declaring the work of His hands.
² Day to day pours forth speech,
And night to night reveals knowledge.
- Psalm 19:1-2

The vastness of the number and their size in comparison to us inspire us with awe and praise towards the God who made them. To study the stars and see them up close and only measure their size and what they are made of is really missing the point.

They serve in ways to define the seasons of the year.

He made the moon for the seasons;
The sun knows the place of its setting.
- Psalm 104:19

I am not sure if this refers to the period after the flood or the gravitational role of the moon on the earth's atmosphere. They also are used by God to give signs to man.

The sun and moon stood still as a sign that God fought for Israel against the Amorites.

¹² Then Joshua spoke to the Lord in the day when the Lord delivered up the Amorites before the sons of Israel, and he said in the sight of Israel,
"O sun, stand still at Gibeon,
And O moon in the valley of Aijalon."
¹³ So the sun stood still, and the moon stopped,
Until the nation avenged themselves of their enemies.
- Joshua 10:12-13

A star was used to identify the birth and birthplace of Jesus

¹ Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem, saying, ² "Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we saw His star in the east and have come to worship Him."

- Matthew 2:1-2

This idea has been perverted by magicians and others who try to use the position of the stars to determine the future or the character of people. God can use His creation in different ways to reveal things about Himself or the future, but man cannot find out things about the future by manipulating God or His creation. That is divination and is condemned by God.

Once again, God sees what He has made and sees no evil thing. All is good, all is in order, all is pleasing in His sight, all has been made in a single dark and light cycle.

SUMMARY OF FOUR DAYS:

1. Time, space, matter, light and dark cycle.
2. Water, atmosphere, water canopy.
3. Water and land separated, vegetation.
4. Sun, moon, stars, in this order.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Summarize the creation events that occurred on day 3 of creation from Genesis 1:9-13 and what stands out to you about these?
2. Summarize the creation events that occurred on day 4 of creation from Genesis 1:14-19 and what stands out to you about these?
3. What is the difference between the light given by the sun and the light given by the moon?
4. Summarize the first four days of creation in your own words.
5. How can you use this lesson to grow spiritually and help others come into a relationship with Jesus?

9.

Day #5

GENESIS 1:20-25

So far we have looked at the first four days of creation:

1. Time, space, matter
2. Water, atmosphere, water canopy
3. Water and land separated, vegetation
4. Sun, moon, stars

DAY 5

²⁰ Then God said, "Let the waters teem with swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth in the open expanse of the heavens." ²¹ God created the great sea monsters and every living creature that moves, with which the waters swarmed after their kind, and every winged bird after its kind; and God saw that it was good. ²² God blessed them, saying, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth." ²³ There was evening and there was morning, a fifth day.

- Genesis 1:20-23

There is a distinction here about the different levels of creation. Until now all things created have no consciousness. Matter and vegetation are changeable, usable, etc. but have no consciousness. On day 5 God creates creatures that have life (soul) and in this context, a certain consciousness.

They are higher life forms than what already exists. On day 5 God creates the creatures that will inhabit the water and the air.

Some things to note about the creation of these creatures:

1. Evolution says that a fragile blob of protoplasm happens to come together in response to an electrical force millions of years ago. Genesis says that the waters suddenly swarmed with living creatures and the sky was filled with birds.
2. It is the first time the term life (soul) appears and refers to the quality of consciousness possessed by animals and man that plants and rocks do not have. This is significant in the sense that this is the second major act of creation.
 - First there is the bringing into being the reality of time, space and energized matter. This is shaped and organized.
 - Now there is brought into being the reality of "consciousness" which is, at first, put into water and air creatures.
3. Specific animals are mentioned. The Hebrew word "*TANNIN*" has also been translated as sea monster or dragon. The references to dragons or sea monsters in the Bible come from this word. This would include the term whale, a creature are familiar with today.
4. These are created ready to reproduce. Again, it is mentioned that they had the power to reproduce and according to modern DNA research this would mean that there could be a wide variety within the species but whales did not become dogs, unless originally created to be such. We do see an evolutionary transition in certain creatures who were, in fact, created to function in this particular way (i.e. tadpoles to frogs or caterpillars to butterflies).
5. God blesses His creation. God pronounces that what He sees is good and also pronounces a blessing on these creatures (what He did not do previously). Their role is to be fruitful, multiply, and fill their habitats (the same command was also given after the

flood). In other places in the Bible we see that God continually cares for and provides for this part of His creation. In Matthew 6:26, "Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, nor reap, nor gather into barns, and yet your Heavenly Father feeds them." The best argument for environmental protection is not that we will become extinct if we are not careful (God has this power, not man). The best argument is that we are partners with God in maintaining and managing His creation and it is part of our responsibility as well as an act of faith to do so.

6. Genesis contradicts normal evolutionary order:

| EVOLUTION | GENESIS |
|---------------------|---------------------|
| 1. Marine organisms | 1. Land plants |
| 2. Land plants | 2. Marine organisms |
| 3. Birds | 3. And birds |

Also, Genesis says that the largest marine creatures were made first, evolution says that the system goes from smallest to largest.

Day 6

²⁴ Then God said, "Let the earth bring forth living creatures after their kind: cattle and creeping things and beasts of the earth after their kind"; and it was so. ²⁵ God made the beasts of the earth after their kind, and the cattle after their kind, and everything that creeps on the ground after its kind; and God saw that it was good.

- Genesis 1:24-25

God follows the pattern He has established earlier. First He creates the intrinsic or essential thing and then builds upon it. For example, the light and then bodies that give off light. In this case He creates sentient life, or conscious life (marine and bird) now He makes other forms of this life, the animals. This is why the passage says that He makes and not creates

animal life. He has already created conscious life forms, now He makes another variety to live on the land.

The land animals are not categorized in the same way as modern scientific systems (amphibians, reptiles, mammals, insects). They are given only three natural categories:

1. **Cattle** – Domestic animals (not just cows). The Hebrew word referred to any four-legged animal.
2. **Wild beast** – referred to those animals of a large size that were not normally used for domestic purposes. Wild animals. Probably includes dinosaurs.
3. **Creeping things** – insects, smaller reptiles, amphibians, small animals like moles, rats, etc.

Some things to note regarding the creation of animals:

1. The Genesis account contradicts the evolutionary account:

| EVOLUTION | GENESIS |
|------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. Insects | 1. All are made simultaneously |
| 2. Amphibians | |
| 3. Reptiles | |
| 4. Mammals | |

As a matter of fact, evolution places insects and the others before the birds and Genesis places birds first and these afterwards.

2. Some say that dinosaurs and man cannot have existed at the same time but Genesis puts their creation on the sixth day along with man and there have been several instances where dinosaur prints and human prints have been found in the same place, side by side.

3. There is no "survival of the fittest" going on here. God sees that what He has made is good, there is no competition for existence.

4. All of these have "souls" or consciousness and are made of the elements that already exist and to which they will return when they die.

The earth is now ready for God's final act of creation. This will be His creation of man.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Summarize the creation events that occurred on day 5 of creation from Genesis 1:20-23 and what stands out to you about the process?
2. What is the difference between the evolutionary model of life and that which is recorded in Genesis?
3. Summarize the creation events that occurred on day 6 of creation as recorded in Genesis 1:24-25 and what stands out to you about the process?
4. How can you use this lesson to grow spiritually and help others come into a relationship with Jesus?

10.

The Creation of Man

GENESIS 1:26-31

So far Genesis has recorded two essential acts of creation:

1. The creation of the inanimate world: matter, atmosphere, vegetation (no consciousness)
2. The creation of the animate world: fish, birds, animals (consciousness, life)

In verse 26, Moses begins to record the third act of creation, the creation of spiritual life.

THE DIVINE COUNCIL

Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness;"
- Genesis 1:26a

This was not the first such council. Many other things had happened before "time", before the creation of the world which had been decided by the Godhead. The decision to sacrifice Jesus for the sins of the world, made before the world was made.

For He was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you.
- I Peter 1:20

The names of those who would receive Christ written in the Book of Life before the foundation of the world.

The beast that you saw was, and is not, and is about to come up out of the abyss and go to destruction. And those who dwell on the earth, whose name has not been written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, will wonder when they see the beast, that he was and is not and will come.
- Revelation 17:8

Note that the dialogue does not address the angels because man is not in the image of angels but of God. This exchange within the Godhead appears in other places in the Bible.

The Lord says to my Lord:
"Sit at My right hand
Until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet."
- Psalm 110:1

Come near to Me, listen to this:
From the first I have not spoken in secret,
From the time it took place, I was there.
And now the Lord God has sent Me, and His Spirit
- Isaiah 48:16

Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, so that they may see My glory which You have given Me, for You loved Me before the foundation of the world."
- John 17:24

This is one of the earliest glimpses that we have of the nature of God. From these verses we learn several things about Him:

1. God is communicative in the sense that ideas are part of His nature and the exchange of them is possible.
2. God has a multi-person nature because the verse refers to one God and yet there is an exchange within the Godhead. This verse also provides the answer to the question, "Where in the Bible does the Trinity come from?"
3. The creation of man was designed and not an outgrowth of existing creatures. God had a concept of what man would be.

The terms "image" or "likeness" mean, among other things, resemblance, figure, model or shape. Man is made to resemble or modelled after God. Some things to note about man's creation:

- The term "*MAN*" is the same as "*ADAM*" and is related to earth (*ADAMAH* – HEBREW). This is given to the first human made because he is essentially created from the same elements that the other creatures are made from, the elements that have already been created, basically the earth.
- The term "*ADAM*" is used in a formal way as the name of the first man only in Genesis 2:19 but the two terms are interchangeable.

Adam has a triune nature that reflects the nature of God: He has a body formed like the bodies of the inanimate creation. Made of matter. He has consciousness like the animate creatures such as birds and animals. He is aware of himself. Some call this "soul." He possesses the spiritual character of God: will, morality, ability to communicate with every aspect of creation as well as other humans and most notably, with God.

That animals communicate with each other in various ways; that they communicate with humans in limited ways (they do not exchange creative ideas) is not unusual. Only man can perceive God and communicate with Him. This is the witness of his spiritual nature.

An important idea here is that the spirit of man is in the image of God, among other things mentioned, it is eternal. Unlike the life of an animal

which is temporal. When a man dies, his body goes to dust, his spirit to God for judgment. When an animal dies, its body goes to dust and its consciousness ceases. We know what happens after death. (The writer of Ecclesiastes merely asks this question as one who doubts.)

Who knows that the breath of man ascends upward and the breath of the beast descends downward to the earth?"
- Ecclesiastes 3:21

Before the world was created God knew what it would be like and how it would function. He also knew that man would sin and planned for this. In addition to this foreknowledge, God also planned the manner of salvation, who would accomplish it, and how it would be received.

He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him.
- Ephesians 1:9

MAN'S POSITION

...and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.
- Genesis 1:26b

Man is not just another animal evolved from lower animals. He has a distinct nature apart from animals and his position in creation is not something that occurs as a result of survival of the fittest. It is a position naturally given him by God. (The term "dominion" means to reign or rule over.)

This rulership is not a kingly rule but more like the idea that the creation is in cooperation with man to support him and see to his needs while He manages and cares for it.

THE ACT OF CREATION

God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them."

- Genesis 1:27

Verse 26 is the preamble that describes what God is about to do and the nature of man once created. Note in verse 27 that the same creative pattern is followed. The generic or essence of the new creation is formed (inanimate, animate) then the variations (matter, vegetation, fish, birds, animals) then God fashions the "spiritual" (likeness of God). Finally the variations are made (male and female).

An important point here is that both male and female share this similar "essence" as spiritual beings, higher than animals, eternal like God. There will be some differences as to form and role which will be given later but the essence is the same.

This is the general description of the creation of man and the placement of where this act fits into the sequence of the six days of creation. Later, Moses will telescope into the details of this creation and what happens to man. At this point, no more explanations are given about the birds, stars, etc. After this description of the six days of creation the narrative will shift to tell the story of man, his fall and how God saved him.

GOD'S CHARGE TO MAN

We need to realize that there are two worlds that are very difficult for us to imagine and understand because they are beyond our present world.

1. World to come. New heaven and earth.
2. Pre-sin world of Adam and Even. Very different because we live in a world of sin and death and they (like heaven) lived in a perfect world.

This is why some of these explanations seem strange to us because they explain another world of which ours only bears a resemblance.

²⁸ God blessed them; and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth." ²⁹ Then God said, "Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the surface of all the earth, and every tree which has fruit yielding seed; it shall be food for you; ³⁰ and to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the sky and to every thing that moves on the earth which has life, I have given every green plant for food"; and it was so. ³¹ God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

- Genesis 1:28-31

After the general description concerning the creation of man and woman, God gives them instructions about what they are to do. Some interesting notes about that change and that world.

1. Only one man and woman are created. However, it seems that many pairs of animals were created since it says that "swarms" were made and they "abundantly" filled the earth.
2. The first command is to fill the earth with mankind. God gave this command with the full knowledge of the earth's ability to sustain mankind. Overpopulation is not due to God's lack of planning but rather to poor management and distribution of resources, along with wars and greed by mankind. The earth can sustain its present population with its technology and resources. It is the sin in the world that creates the problem of misery.
3. To subdue and have dominion does not mean to ruthlessly exploit the environment. It means to understand and manage the creation for the good of all its inhabitants. Science to understand and technology to develop and use the resources for the benefit of all. In that perfect world the order was evident and open to understanding; the creation was also compliant for development and exploration. There were no struggles for survival. Life was to be an exercise of joy and discovery.

4. Man was originally given the vegetation to eat. The suggestion is that before sin they ate no meat. It is not clear if the same was true for animals but it seems that they too only ate vegetation.

Some ideas on this:

- Men may have begun to eat meat after the sin of Adam in disobedience to God. (Jabal introduced cattle raising in Genesis 4:20)
- God gave man permission to eat meat after the flood (Genesis 9).
- Animals may have been kept under population control in the pre-sin world by God in order to avoid the predatory cycle.
- After the sin of Adam or after the Flood, animals began to be meat eaters themselves (Their need for protein in a harsh climate).
- If God can create the world, He may have kept it in balance without the need for killing or meat eating. These activities may have come after the curse and certainly came after the Flood.

ALTERNATE IDEA – YOUNG EARTH, NOT FULLY MATURED AT CREATION.

God sees that everything He had made was very good. This suggests certain things:

- No death, because death is the result of sin and everything is good.
- No fossils, etc. because these are the result of death. The Flood can explain the presence of fossils.
- No devil. The Bible says that He looked at everything He had made (that must include angels because angels were made by God and were present when God created the world).

If God saw that everything He made was very good at this point, it means that everything is good and without sin and that includes Lucifer. He also rejoiced at this point. The devil's rebellion must have come later along with his fall. He may have been jealous of man's creation in God's likeness and his role in serving man and thus fell.

The final act is the creation of man and the charge to inhabit the earth, learn about and manage the creation for the good of all. This is mans responsibility towards the creation.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Summarize the actions of creation up to the point of God's creation of man and how these actions support one another.
2. In what ways are the inanimate elements and the animate elements of creation alike? How are they different?
3. What is significant about God's statement in Genesis 1:26a?
4. What is meant by man in the image of God?
5. How does man possess the nature of God?
6. What is man's position in relation to the other things God created (Genesis 1:26b)?
7. Summarize God's charge to man in Genesis 1:28-31 and what is meant by the expression, "very good"?
8. How can you use this lesson to grow spiritually and help others come into a relationship with Jesus?

11.

God's Rest and Man's Creation

GENESIS 2:1-7

In chapter one of Genesis, we have seen the three acts of creation:

1. The creation of the inanimate world
2. The creation of the animate world
3. The creation of man who is a combination of inanimate, animate and spiritual in one being.

In Genesis 1 we see the panorama of creation unfolding in six days. The world and all that is within it is created and set into place. There will now be mention of the seventh day and then Moses will telescope into this panorama in order to give us more detail about the creation of man and the pre-sin environment.

After this detail is given, Moses will begin to tell the story of the first man and woman after the creation is completed.

THE DAY OF REST

Note that the Bible says that everything that was created, was created then.

¹ Thus the heavens and the earth were completed, and all their hosts. ² By the seventh day God completed His work

which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. ³ Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made.

- Genesis 2:1-3

- Vs. 1 – Everything that was in the heavens and on the earth was done. No new creation or unknown creation.
- Vs. 2 – The word "rested" means to refrain from doing. God refrained from creating any other form of life whether it be animate or inanimate or a combination thereof. It even says that by the seventh day God had completed all that He had purposed to do in creation. If it is not here by this time, it is not going to be here (this is why I believe there is no other animate life in the universe).
- Vs. 3 – The writer repeats the same idea except now God blesses time itself. He has looked at the world that He has created and blessed it (made acceptable). He also blesses the concept of activity (we call it work). Next, God blesses the concept of time spent not working (Rest). Time not invested in work or activity might become an issue of guilt for man but God avoids this by making acceptable the concept of rest and retreat from work.

The time for rest will be elaborated and explained through the Law as the balance between actual rest and worship is explained. For now, however, the pattern of creation is followed:

1. God creates the generic or essential concept, in this case it is the sacredness of time without activity.
2. Later, He will give form to this time as time for rest, time for celebration, time for worship, etc.

If you do not think this is important, why do people write books with titles like, "Whenever I stop working, I feel guilty"? God knew that the use of

time would be an issue for man and so He blesses a period of time in the cycle which will later be used for rest and worship.

Another point to note is that God "rested" after the work of creation was done but it did not mean that all His work was done. He will soon begin the work of salvation through Christ and this will finish with Christ on the cross.

GENERATIONAL DIVISION OF GENESIS

1. Generations of Heaven and Earth – 1:1-2:4
2. The book of the generations of Adam – 2:4-5:1
3. Generations of Noah – 5:1-6:9
4. Generations of Sons of Noah – 6:9-10:1

Adam's Perspective

I mentioned previously that the natural divisions of the book of Genesis could be that of generations because at various points throughout Genesis the different sections end with the notation, "These are the generations of..."

This suggests that the ancient patriarchs kept records of their times and passed them down from generation to generation. When God gave Moses instructions to write the book of Genesis I said that what he probably did was edit these ancient records under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. As we arrive at chapter 2, we see that the first section is closed.

This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that the Lord God made earth and heaven.

- Genesis 2:4

This may have been given to Moses directly by God since there were no witnesses to creation. This first section gives the information concerning the "generations" of the creation itself. In chapters 2:4 to 5:1 note that this section will describe the generation of Adam and his life and times.

This is the book of the generations of Adam.
- Genesis 5:1

It has been suggested that Adam is the author (God created him literate) of this section and what we read in this section is Adam's account of the world he lived in and the events that took place in the garden. Moses used this account to complete his transcript. The material in chapter 2 does not contradict chapter 1, it merely adds more detailed information to what we have in chapter 1.

Pre-sin Environment

⁵ Now no shrub of the field was yet in the earth, and no plant of the field had yet sprouted, for the Lord God had not sent rain upon the earth, and there was no man to cultivate the ground. ⁶ But a mist used to rise from the earth and water the whole surface of the ground."
- Genesis 2:5-6

These verses give us a "ground view" of the pre-sin, pre-flood condition of the world. It demonstrates how things looked and operated in the original system where the water canopy above the atmosphere regulated the temperature and weather. This is a description of the earth before there was vegetation or animals, how the earth received moisture, not from rainfall but from a mist. The earth is moisturized by mist from local evaporation controlled by the water canopy as well as by underground rivers.

The author gives a glimpse into this ancient world and then proceeds to explain in detail the creation of man and woman. He does not elaborate on the preceding days when vegetation or animals are created. He simply reveals an image of that time period (perhaps to establish authenticity) and goes directly to describe in more detail the creation of man somewhat like the scene in a movie where you get a wide shot then the camera focuses in on a particular thing.

The creation of man - in detail

Then the Lord God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.
- Genesis 2:7

Some interesting points about the creation of man:

1. The author uses the word "formed" here because in chapter 1 he described the creation of man. In chapter two he explains how man is formed, and how God accomplished this.
2. Note that man's body is composed of the basic elements of the earth. Not just "dust" but the smallest particles of which the earth is formed (nitrogen, oxygen, calcium, etc.). Modern science has proven that human beings do share a basic elemental structure with the raw materials of the earth (although it is not evident to the eye, flesh does not look like rocks or dirt). Moses records this fact 3,500 years ago.
3. Man's body is formed (like the original "matter" was formed) but now it needs to be "energized" in order to come to life. God creates the animals by the pronouncement of His word and they appear with consciousness. Now God, gives not only sentient life to man (consciousness) but a spiritual awareness of God as well. God does not "speak" this into man but rather breathes it into existence. This is a much more intimate relationship with the creation of the Creator. Something of God goes into the making of man, unlike animals.
4. This is also another way of refuting the idea of evolution. If evolution is so, at what point in the scale does man begin to have the idea of God's existence, a notion of beauty, mercy, justice or a sense of ought? These do not come from the ground up. High and noble ideas do not emanate from the lower species, high ideas come from above. Man does not receive his spirit from animals, he receives it from God at his creation. He begins as an intelligent, believing, communicative and spiritual being.
5. Adam was the first human being. I Corinthians 15:45 says, "The first man, Adam, was a living soul." There were no people, humans or

higher beings in the type of Adam (matter, consciousness, spirit) before Adam or after him. After Adam, God rested from His creation. This rules out human-like life forms in outer space (sorry Star-Trek fans). No use looking for "intelligent" life because it is not out there.

In our next chapter, we will look at how God fires up man's moral capabilities, some pre-sin geography and the creation of woman.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What are some implications of the word, "rested" as used in Genesis 2:1-3?
2. What action did God do regarding the seventh day and what was a related activity for Israel?
3. What is the relationship between Genesis 1:1 and Genesis 2:4?
4. How does Genesis 2:5-6 describe the earth before man was created and what does this signify?
5. Summarize how God created man from Genesis 2:7 and answer the following questions:
 - How was man formed (Genesis 1:26)?
 - What is different about breathing life into man and the creation of animals?
6. How can you use this lesson to grow spiritually and help others come into a relationship with Jesus?

12.

The Moral Choice

GENESIS 2:8-20

So far in our series we have covered Genesis 1:1 to Genesis 2:7. In this section the Bible describes:

1. The creation of the inanimate world. The non-living things.
2. The creation of the animate world. Those things that live and breathe.
3. The creation of man who is a combination of inanimate (the material of his body), animate (he lives and breathes) and the spiritual (he is aware of not only himself and others but God as well).
4. Moses also gives some detailed description of the way God created man and a glimpse into the condition of the environment in a world where sin did not exist.

In the next section Moses will begin describing the location where Adam lived, the establishment of the principle of law and man's first interaction with his environment.

THE GARDEN – 2:8-14

The Lord God planted a garden toward the east, in Eden; and there He placed the man whom He had formed.

- Genesis 2:8

This verse summarizes what God did with man once he was created: he put him in a special place, a place that would be his home. The term “Eden” means delight.

Out of the ground the Lord God caused to grow every tree that is pleasing to the sight and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

- Genesis 2:9

In this place God Himself prepared a garden that would serve as Adam's home. Note that when God made the plants they simply appeared but God formed this garden Himself with the specific purpose of providing for Adam's needs.

Two trees are noted: the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

The tree of life could be symbolic of spiritual truth or God's word as well as an actual tree with health or life sustaining properties. (Idea that man was originally created to live forever).

The tree of the knowledge of good and evil, we know, was an actual tree because Eve and Adam actually ate fruit from it. The Bible does not say what kind of fruit.

¹⁰ Now a river flowed out of Eden to water the garden; and from there it divided and became four rivers. ¹¹ The name of the first is Pishon; it flows around the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold. ¹² The gold of that land is good; the bdellium and the onyx stone are there. ¹³ The name of the second river is Gihon; it flows around the whole land of Cush. ¹⁴ The name of the third river is Tigris; it flows east of Assyria. And the fourth river is the Euphrates."

- Genesis 2:10-14

Moses describes rivers situated in this area. Remember that this was the geography that existed before the flood removed these ancient landmarks. There was one river through the garden that separated into four others. Hiddekel is later associated with Assyrian monuments and referred to as Tigris. Euphrates, Pishon and Gihon rivers are the others.

The geography described and the way the rivers flow does not match any known geography of our day and so it seems that Genesis is describing the pre-flood geography that was destroyed by the flood, as Peter says, "...the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished." (II Peter 3:6). The pre-flood names were kept to describe post-flood lands and rivers.

We know roughly the area because the artifacts of the earliest civilizations have been found there. There is also mention of precious stones. Many of these have no known comparisons today. Suffice to say that God prepared an earthly home for Adam that he describes, and we study this to capture another glimpse into a world that no longer exists.

THE MORAL CHOICE – 2:15-17

Then the Lord God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it.
- Genesis 2:15

Man is now fully equipped: he has a body and he exists. He has a soul that animates his body and enables him to co-exist and relate to his environment. He has a spirit that enables him to co-exist and relate to God.

God must now create the environment within which man will co-exist with Him. Let me explain... As a physical being man dwells in the environment of the earth and depends upon and co-exists within this environment. But God is a spirit, how does man connect, meet and relate to God? The answer is that he connects with God in the moral realm. God is holy, pure, just and loving. Man will meet with and relate to God in these terms within these realities.

In order to bring these abstract or spiritual things into view, into man's world, God creates a moral framework or world into which He and man can meet and relate. This moral world is framed by a command:

¹⁶ The Lord God commanded the man, saying, "From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; ¹⁷ but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die.

- Genesis 2:16-17

The command is lived out in the physical world (eating or not eating the fruit). The response to the command is what brings God into view for man:

God lives in the world of absolute holiness, justice, love, peace, etc. How does man enter this world? He does so through the exercise of his will in response to God's command. To obey expresses trust, love and respect. Through obedience man experiences love, blessings, joy and peace. These are all things that have no material equivalent. These are the realities of the spiritual world where God lives, and made known by the moral choices that man must make.

To disobey signifies rebellion, ingratitude, hatred and the knowledge of death heretofore hidden from sight. Evil exists and can be experienced or "known" through disobedience just as peace, joy, love, etc. can be experienced or known through obedience.

By giving the command, therefore, God does several things:

- He activates man's ability to use his intelligence in a moral context and not just to provide for food, etc., but also to deal with God, not simply the environment.
- He puts man's destiny into his own hands. If we were absolutely free we would be God. Man never had unlimited freedom because ultimately God is there and we cannot destroy or rule over Him. But man is given the freedom to choose the very best life for

himself with God or destroy his life in rejecting God. God gives man the power over his own life.

- He makes possible a way for man to perceive Him. Man cannot perceive God merely through physical means, so God provides a moral environment where man can experience his relationship with God, for good and for evil.

In this passage God not only does this for Adam but by establishing the "principle of law" He does so for every other human that will live thereafter.

MAN AND THE ANIMALS – 2:18-20

Now that man is a complete physical, spiritual and moral being, God will provide a partner to complete the creation. But first, God will educate Adam about the world and the creatures that inhabit it.

One thing the Bible does not do is establish any common ancestry between man and animals. The evolutionary idea that man is a descendant of animals, most likely "apes" is refuted by both the Bible and by many scientists as well. The "missing links" that would demonstrate a progression from apes to man are still missing today like they were in the day of Darwin who first proposed the idea.

Anthropologists and paleontologists have found fossils of both apes and man but have yet to discover anything in between to link the two.

In recent years some scientists have put forth the so-called *AUSTRALOPITHECUS* fossils as a possible missing link but more recent discoveries have shown that this "missing link" was probably an ape with smaller teeth and skull because of its peculiar diet. Drs. Leakey and Johanssen, both anthropologists tell us that fossils that were truly human and fossils that were truly ape-like were found as early as the time that *Australopithecus* or *Homo Erectus* existed. So far, as the research shows, man has always been man and apes have always been apes, just like the Bible says.

Then the Lord God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him."

- Genesis 2:18

God has already said that all He sees is very good so His pronouncement regarding Adam is not about evil but rather completeness. Adam is good but his status, alone, is not a good thing. How to convey this to Adam? He is alone and this is not according to God's complete design but how to make him aware of this? He does not know what he is missing. The Bible says that man should not be alone, this is not his natural state and so God will make a help meet for him.

Note that God is the one who declares that being alone is not good and God specifically determines the type of companion that man will have. The term is a help-meet for him, not a helpmeet. The original root of this word meant to surround or protect. The form in Genesis means to aid or help. The word "meet" is exactly the same Hebrew word but in a different form. Together you could say, "a helper to help" him or an "aid to assist or save him" (the salvation is from loneliness).

However, before God can provide this, He must bring Adam to the realization of his need through interaction with the animal world.

¹⁹ Out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the sky, and brought *them* to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called a living creature, that was its name. ²⁰ The man gave names to all the cattle, and to the birds of the sky, and to every beast of the field, but for Adam there was not found a helper suitable for him."

- Genesis 2:19-20

Therefore, God makes Adam review and name the animals that He has created. This suggests several things:

1. Adam was created with some form of language that we are not aware of at this time but could be used for communication and

understanding at that time. Language also was created by God and developed into many varieties.

2. The fact that Adam gave names suggests that he was an intelligent being who understood the nature and role of the animals in creation and named them based on his intuitive knowledge.
3. The review of the animal world taught Adam three very important things:
 - He was superior to the creation in which he lived; the animals did not talk back.
 - He was alone: the animals were in pairs, he was singular.
 - He could rule over the animal world, as God had told him, but he could not have fellowship with them. For this he realized he would need a special companion. This prepared him for God's final act of creation.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Summarize the events of Genesis 2:8-14 and answer the following questions:
 - What is significant about the Garden?
 - What two specific trees were placed in the garden and what were their significance?
 - Why are the geographical properties described in Genesis 2:10-14 not present today?
2. Why did God place man in the garden and what is the implication for us today (Genesis 2:15)?
3. Why did God give man a choice rather than simply creating a being without free will?
4. Why did God bring every creature before Adam to name?
5. What is the significance of Eve being created from Adam rather than the earth as Adam was?
6. How can you use this lesson to grow spiritually and help others come into a relationship with Jesus?

13.

The Creation of Woman

GENESIS 2:21-25

In the previous chapter we reviewed the details of the creation of man:

1. God initiates man's ability to use his intelligence in relating to God through moral choices. In choosing right from wrong, man demonstrates several things:
 - a) His superiority over animals.
 - b) His ability to perceive and relate to a higher being (why do it if no God?).
 - c) His freedom to affect his own future.
2. God instructs man concerning his environment, especially the animal kingdom.
3. God leads man to the knowledge of his aloneness and need for fellowship with a like being, not possible through his rulership over the animal species.

This prepares man for God's final act of creation: woman.

²¹ So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then He took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh at that place. ²² The Lord God fashioned into a woman

the rib which He had taken from the man, and brought her to the man."

- Genesis 2:21-22

Some things to note regarding the creation of woman:

1. The "sleep" of Adam and the new life that eventually proceeded after his sleep was the first preview of the death and resurrection of Jesus, as well as the death and resurrection of man as a new creature. It is also a wonderful metaphor for marriage where one dies to self in order to create a new identity of the couple in marriage.
2. The word "rib" is not the most accurate translation of the Hebrew word into English and fails to convey fully the idea in this action. A more accurate word is "side", and it is translated this way 20 of the 35 times it is used in the Old Testament. The point is that God did not simply remove a bone, but an entire part of man's side that included bone, flesh and blood. The idea is that God did not remove from the head or the feet to signify superiority or inferiority, but rather from the side to demonstrate the equal nature of the two genders. She was given as a helpmeet (not as a servant but rather as one suitable to help Adam). Suitable to complete him as a human being and eliminate his and her own loneliness, and suitable to partner with him in the stewardship of the creation.
3. God could have formed her from the ground as well but did not because He wanted Eve to share the nature of man. However, her likeness to God was given to her by God, not taught to her by man (Genesis 1:27). Her form, her essence, her function, and her psyche were all created by God.
4. God brought woman to man. His original design is for woman, one woman, to be with only one man.

THE FAMILY – VS. 23-25

The first social unit created (not evolved) is the family. It is such a basic, inherent unit that in any society at any point in history, when the family unit disintegrates, so does that society.

For example, the Roman Empire collapsed because divorce and sexual perversion became rampant and weakened the Empire from within so that it became vulnerable from without.

The family unit is the basis for larger social structures like tribes, nations and governments. Even the church is modeled after the family and much imagery of the family is used to describe it (Bride of Christ, brothers and sisters, etc.). In these verses the structure and attitude that create and sustain healthy families are put forth:

The man said, "This is now bone of my bones,
And flesh of my flesh;
She shall be called Woman,
Because she was taken out of Man.
- Genesis 2:23

When Adam named the animals he knew from observation that they were "alive" but not like himself because of their form and their limitations. When God brings Eve to him he recognizes that although her form is different, she is similar to him in nature and suitable for fellowship. He acknowledges not only that she is human, but in doing so acknowledges her status alongside himself as one who is in the image of God.

Just as he had "named" the animals, he now also names the one brought to him by God. He calls her "woman." The Hebrew for man was "*ISH*", and Hebrew for woman is "*ISHA*."

Woman is not a separate identity but derives her identity from man because she was formed from man and not other materials. God did not create her from nothing. He made her from the side of man. This is why men and women fit well together physically, emotionally and spiritually.

For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother,
and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh.

- Genesis 2:24

In one verse the Bible provides a summary of the elements of what a family is, how it is formed and how to guarantee its health:

1. A family is made up of a man, a woman and their children. There are variations of this today: two dads and one child, single parents, children raising other children, childless couples, groups living together.

These can develop family characteristics and share the warmth of family but the original and ideal combination are a man, a woman and their children.

2. Families are formed when children leave existing families and form new ones through marriage. When this happens, a new family unit is created and the dynamics change. The loyalty of the children change to include their spouse as the priority relationship. Parents need to "let go" at this point.

More problems in marriages are caused by children who put their parents ahead of their partners and parents who refuse to recognize the new roles of children: the male child is now head of his own home. The female child has a new priority in her marriage and family (in-laws need to recognize this).

3. In order for the marriage to work, it needs three basic ingredients:

A. Intimacy (cleave/joined to his wife).

The term cleave/joined means to be "glued to" or hang onto. The point is that marriage must produce a "closeness" between the couple not available in any other relationship or situation. In a practical sense this means that we are closer to our partners and we cherish our partners more than any other person, activity or pursuit. Marriage is a commitment to make the other person the priority over whatever else was our priority before we were married.

Look at successful marriages (where people are not just together, but where they are thankful and happy for being together) and you will see that the difference in their marriage is that their partners are their #1 priority, not work or hobbies, etc.

B. Exclusivity (one flesh)

The term "one flesh" refers to the exclusive sexual relationship found in marriage. However, this idea also includes the emotional, social and spiritual bond that faithful couples experience in marriage as well. Couples are sometimes united legally and sexually but are not bonded together in any other way. In order to be fulfilled in a marital union the couple needs to make an effort to share as much of their lives as possible. Sharing religious beliefs, dreams for the future, responsibilities for others, etc. builds upon their initial sexual unity and serves to create the oneness and intimacy that all couples seek but do not often know how to produce in their marriages.

One flesh means that the couple abandons its individuality and independence and works towards interdependence (not co-dependence) in becoming a single unit made up of two individuals.

C. Longevity

It is not specified here but the intention of God with the family is that it is to be a permanent union. This is the ideal established in the Garden and it is this ideal that Jesus refers to in Matthew 19:8 in teaching on what marriage ought to be.

Throughout history God has made provision for man's failure in this area as well as forgiveness and restoration through the gospel but the original ideal and pattern for what a marriage is and ought to be has never changed.

And the man and his wife were both naked
and were not ashamed.
- Genesis 2:25

Finally, to close out the chapter and the episode, there is a brief glimpse into that first relationship before sin and death entered the world.

1. They were both naked because the weather did not require clothing; the law did not require clothing and their consciences did not require them to wear clothing to avoid shame or embarrassment.
2. It refers to them now as the man and his wife. An acknowledgement of marriage and family.

At this point someone might ask, "How did they marry?"

ORIGINAL PATTERN FOR MARRIAGE

1. Knowledge: courtship, dating and betrothal
 - Man recognizes woman as one like him, honors her and accepts her place and role along his side.
2. Covenant: marriage ceremony, legal document
 - Man acknowledges her before a witness (God witnesses that she belongs to him and he to her)
3. Confirmation: sex, live together
 - They confirm their union sexually (one flesh)

When these are done out of order, there is always trouble.

Every ancient and modern society recognizes and practices in some form or other the principle of monogamous marriage and family. There are some polygamous societies but these are always aberrations and do not usually survive.

They were not ashamed because there was no knowledge of evil in any form to cause guilt and shame. Their nakedness was natural and was a symbol of their open, transparent, and trusting relationship.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Summarize how God created woman and discuss its significance.
2. What did Adam call this new creation and what is the significance of it?
3. What is the significance of Genesis 2:24?
4. Defend the statement that the family serves as the foundation of society.
5. Explain how the three entities of intimacy, exclusivity, and longevity provide for the success of a marriage.
6. How can you use this lesson to grow spiritually and help others come into a relationship with Jesus?

14.

The First Appearance of Satan in the Bible

GENESIS 3:1

At the close of chapter 2 in Genesis, we see a picture of the world where everything is "very good." No pain, no suffering, no disharmony, no struggle for survival, no sin, and no death. However, if we look at the world today we see that this is not the situation. Things wear down and out (even stars); animals and people age and die; civilizations rise and fall; people are more easily drawn to evil than to good.

This situation in the present world is vastly different than it was in Genesis 2. The problem of evil and death has been the subject of endless speculation by philosophers and theologians who have asked the question, "If God is omnipotent and holy, why does He permit such things? How could evil have entered a perfect world?"

There have been many theories given to try to answer this question throughout the years. Here are a few:

1. **Atheism** is not simply a belief that there is no higher being. Atheism says that if there is a God, He is either evil or unable to stop evil, therefore He is not an almighty God.
2. **Dualism** is a philosophy that is contained in many eastern religions. It says that good and evil are dual forces that have always existed and that battle for dominance. *Star Wars* movies used this idea where the "force" of good through Luke Skywalker

battled the "dark side" represented by Darth Vader. Their story was just an episode in the continuing battle.

3. **Materialism, secularism, humanism, existentialism** are more modern ideas that say that life is what you make it, good or evil. They teach that there is no such thing as good or evil. They propose the idea that you are the one who makes something good for yourself or bad for yourself. In other words, if something is good for you, then it is good and if it is bad for you, then it is bad.

We could go on and on because each culture and generation comes up with different ideas to try and explain the origin and existence of evil.

Thanks be to God that He provided us with the true and original source for evil and the manner in which it affected the creation.

Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world,
and death through sin, and so death spread to all men,
because all sinned
- Romans 5:12

Death came through evil, evil through sin, and sin through man. However, before man could sin he had to be persuaded by an outside agent since there was nothing in him to lead him to sin. This is why in Genesis 3:1 we have a description of Satan in the disguise of a serpent.

SATAN

Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field
which the Lord God had made.
- Genesis 3:1a

Johnny Carson, host of the Tonight Show, used to argue with Ed McMahon about who was smarter, a chicken or a pig. The point was that some animals seemed to be smarter than others.

The Bible says that in the pre-sin world, the serpent was the most intelligent. The word subtle means cunning or crafty. This is the first appearance of Satan in the scripture. We do not know this right away but in Revelation 12:9, the Bible says that the serpent was the devil himself.

Not very much is written directly about Satan, there is no narrative in the Bible that describes step by step (like the creation in Genesis 1:1-ff) when he was created and what he did. We learn about him through references from the prophets who compared human situations to things that Satan did or things that happened to Satan in the spiritual world. For example:

1. Isaiah 14:12-15

¹² "How you have fallen from heaven,
O star of the morning, son of the dawn!
You have been cut down to the earth,
You who have weakened the nations!
¹³ "But you said in your heart,
'I will ascend to heaven;
I will raise my throne above the stars of God,
And I will sit on the mount of assembly
In the recesses of the north.
¹⁴ 'I will ascend above the heights of the clouds;
I will make myself like the Most High.'
¹⁵ "Nevertheless you will be thrust down to Sheol,
To the recesses of the pit.

Here the prophet is talking in a literal sense about the king of Babylon who had become proud thinking that he had conquered the world by his own strength. Isaiah warns that God will bring him down (and historically He did, the king went mad and ran around thinking he was an animal for several years) until he repented and God restored him.

In a spiritual sense Isaiah is comparing what happened to this earthly prince to what happened to a prince of the heavens, LUCIFER (day star).

Apparently, Lucifer had become proud as the chief of angels and desired to rise above God. Some say his sin was to disbelieve that God had created him and assume that he had evolved to this height and now he could go higher in the evolutionary chain to be first.

Isaiah says that this sin of pride caused his downfall from his lead position and ultimately brought him to the pit of hell, created specifically for him and those who follow him (Revelation 20:10).

NB. Hell was created after earth since there was no need for it before, since all was good.

2. Ezekiel 28:12-19

¹² “Son of man, take up a lamentation over the king of Tyre and say to him, “Thus says the Lord God, “You had the seal of perfection, Full of wisdom and perfect in beauty.

¹³ “You were in Eden, the garden of God; Every precious stone was your covering: The ruby, the topaz and the diamond; The beryl, the onyx and the jasper; The lapis lazuli, the turquoise and the emerald; And the gold, the workmanship of your settings and sockets, Was in you.

On the day that you were created They were prepared.

¹⁴ “You were the anointed cherub who covers, And I placed you there. You were on the holy mountain of God; You walked in the midst of the stones of fire.

¹⁵ “You were blameless in your ways From the day you were created Until unrighteousness was found in you.

¹⁶ “By the abundance of your trade You were internally filled with violence, And you sinned;

Therefore I have cast you as profane
From the mountain of God.
And I have destroyed you, O covering cherub,
From the midst of the stones of fire.
¹⁷ “Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty;
You corrupted your wisdom by reason of your splendor.
I cast you to the ground; I put you before kings,
That they may see you.
¹⁸ “By the multitude of your iniquities,
In the unrighteousness of your trade
You profaned your sanctuaries.
Therefore I have brought fire from the midst of you;
It has consumed you,
And I have turned you to ashes on the earth
In the eyes of all who see you.
¹⁹ “All who know you among the peoples
Are appalled at you;
You have become terrified
And you will cease to be forever.””

Ezekiel prophecies against the many kingdoms around Israel and warns them about what is to befall them because of their sins. One of these kings and kingdoms was Tyre (Lebanon). It was a wealthy nation based on its trade and shipping ability. Its king thought that his island city capital was impenetrable and scoffed at the idea that his nation, that was at its height and power for almost 600 years (12th to 6th century B.C.), could be defeated. However, Nebuchadnezzar, the Babylonian king that destroyed Jerusalem, laid siege to Tyre as well and after 13 years of warfare, conquered the city, thus ending its dominance. Ezekiel said it would be reduced to a bare rock and that has been so because it never regained its prominence throughout history.

In a spiritual sense Ezekiel is also referring to another fall that he compares the king of Tyre to, and that seems to be the fall of Satan. The words he uses could not only describe a human king, there is also another parallel. Some insights we gain from this passage:

1. He was created – vs. 13b
2. He was wise and beautiful – vs. 12-13
3. He was in Eden and was part of that pre-sin world – vs. 12-13
4. He served as guardian (cover) perhaps the Tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and had access to the throne of God (Holy Mountain).
5. He was created perfect – vs. 15
6. His sin was from within, he was not subject to external temptation – vs. 15
7. The source of sin was pride in his beauty (Old Testament Hebrew word is *brightness*. – vs. 17a)
8. The result of this sin was to try to lift himself up, change his position beneath God to be equal with or above God – Jude 6
9. This sin caused his destruction – vs. 17-19. The prophets in the Old Testament and John in Revelation speak in terms that this has already been done but they talk with the idea that if God has declared such a thing, it is as good as done, so they describe the final results as already accomplished, even if they are still in the future.
10. Now he no longer has his position as one who stands as first before God or guards or covers. Now his spiritual abode is the pit of darkness, his place in the world is no longer as guardian of the tree but as an enemy, as an adversary (what the word Satan means in Hebrew) lurking about in a serpent's body ready to attack those who come by the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

SATAN AND THE SERPENT

And he said to the woman, "Indeed, has God said, 'You shall not eat from any tree of the garden'
- Genesis 3:1b

The question is why a serpent's body and how a serpent's body? We now arrive in an area where the Bible does not give us a lot of information. You have to deduce based on what you know.

1. Satan has fallen, no longer in the presence of God, perhaps because of this he no longer is beautiful, no longer is "bright." II Corinthians 11:14 says that Satan only disguises himself as an angel of light, not that he is one.

He takes the body of an earthly creature to hide his true identity which might be a warning to Eve. Adam and Eve were intelligent, spiritually discerning people, they may have known who he was if he appeared as himself.

2. The serpent is naturally a wise and crafty animal, superior to others in the animal kingdom. The word serpent meant to "hiss" in Hebrew, and also meant to whisper. How a spirit inhabits a physical body is unknown to us. The Bible tells us that it happens for both evil and good. Evil spirits possess = control; Holy Spirit indwells = lives with.

There is always a debate about whether or not Satan or an evil spirit can still possess people today. There are good arguments on both sides, but one thing is sure: Satan or his angels cannot inhabit one in whom the Holy Spirit dwells (I John 4:4).

3. Another point about which there is much speculation is, who does the talking. Here are three possibilities:

- The devil spoke through the serpent.
- The serpent spoke and Satan guided, controlled its speech.
- The snake telepathically communicated to Eve's mind these thoughts and words.

A. If Satan possessed the snake then it is certainly possible for him to speak through a creature that did not normally speak. Balaam's donkey spoke to the prophet in Numbers 22:28 though the power of God.

The argument against this is that Eve, who like Adam, ruled over the animal kingdom would have seen something unusual about a snake speaking.

B. If Satan guided the snake's speech, then it seems some animals could talk and communicate with man. The snake was the smartest, perhaps this denoted speech capabilities. This might be possible in a pre-sin world and scientists have found traces of speech mechanisms and patterns in animals. This would explain why Eve was not alarmed at the snake's speech.

C. Then there is the Hollywood point of view where Eve is thinking these things in her mind, a kind of a self-talk with the devil in her heart and the devil truly present in the form of a snake. This sidesteps the tricky problems of a snake actually speaking somehow, but the words of the Bible do say that the snake actually said these words to the woman.

In any event we have the woman in the presence of the tree of knowledge of good and evil; we have a serpent possessed by Satan who will lure her into using her free will to disobey God. In the next chapter we will examine the dialogue between the serpent and the woman.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How does Genesis 3:1 describe Satan (the serpent – Revelation 12:9) and how do you understand the word used?
2. What similarities are there between the descriptions of Satan from Genesis 3:1, Isaiah 14:12-15, Ezekiel 28:12-19, and I Peter 5:8?
3. How does Paul in Romans 5:12 describe the entrance of sin into creation?
4. How can you use this lesson to grow spiritually and help others come into a relationship with Jesus?

15.

Eve's 5 Mistakes

GENESIS 3:1-6

In the previous chapter we reviewed the first appearance of Satan in the world. Satan, we said, was originally an angel who rebelled against God and was thrown down from his position. We only learn this from indirect references concerning him found in Isaiah, Ezekiel as well as I Peter, Jude and Revelation. Other mentions of him talk about his influence in the world for evil but not about his origin and what led to his downfall.

In Genesis all we have is an image of craftiness portrayed by his taking on the form of a snake and his opening question to Eve as she surveyed the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

In the garden there were two special trees (tree of life and tree of knowledge of good and evil), one tree prepared Adam and Eve for the other. If they did not eat of one, they would get to eat of the other. The lesson that free will needed to learn was that obedience to God's laws results in eternal life. Adam and Eve failed to learn that lesson and Genesis 3 is the story of that failure. I call it Eve's five mistakes.

We have to go back to verse one to pick up the beginning of the temptation.

And he said to the woman, "Indeed, has God said, 'You shall not eat from any tree of the garden'?"

- Genesis 3:1b

Verse 1b begins with not just a question but a subtle questioning of God's authority and goodness. Has God really said this? Is He really serious about this command? The inference is that He has denied you something that could be good for you.

The method is the same today. The temptation to doubt that God really means what He says and the suggestion that what God forbids is actually good and pleasant for you. (God is spoiling my fun!)

Mistake #1 – She compromised with a rebel

The woman said to the serpent,
- Genesis 3:2a

Not only does Eve respond to a rebel sinner and try to reason with him, she became part of the rebellion by condescending to talk with him. She should have rebuked him. She tolerated the serpent's challenge to the order of things and began immediately to take a weaker position. She should have acted like Michael the archangel who when in dispute with the devil simply declared, "The Lord rebuke you" (Jude 9): He did not engage.

Mistake #2 – She changed God's word

^{2b} "From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat; ³ but from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat from it or touch it, or you will die.'" - Genesis 3:2b-3

She attempts to correct the serpent's question but in her answer you can see that the damage has already been done. In her answer she both adds and subtracts from God's word. She makes God more restrictive and demanding than He really is, thus reinforcing what Satan was suggesting.

God said, "You may freely eat..." Eve said, "We may eat..." God gave them full rights, abundance, she said that they had access. Eve said that you could not touch. God did not restrict touching. To examine and understand what was forbidden was permissible. It was to partake that was forbidden.

Changing God's word to be too strict or too liberal is wrong. We tend to think that being too strict is a safeguard against liberalism but to change either way is a violation. She was too strict.

Mistake #3 – She considered the offer

⁴ The serpent said to the woman, "You surely will not die!" ⁵ For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." ⁶ When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make *one* wise,
- Genesis 3:4-6a

Had Eve rebuked Satan at this point, the matter would have been closed and history much different. Note that the temptation is the same one that led to Satan's fall "You will be like God."

Eve discusses the matter with Satan thus considering his proposal. This makes him bolder. When you do not put down someone's evil idea or action, they get more ambitious and double their attempt to win you over. Now Satan does not question the law, he actually accuses God of jealousy and dishonesty:

- Liar – It is not that you will die, it is that you will be like God.
- Jealous – He lied to you because He does not want you to be like Him.

He makes the way of the curse the way of the blessing. Good is Evil / Evil is Good. God said that if they would refrain from the tree of good and evil, they would eat of the tree of life. Satan tells them the opposite. Yes, they

would know good and evil and it would make them like God, not destroy them.

In "considering" the offer she was opening herself up for temptation at three levels:

- Physical temptation: "good for food." Something that appeals to the senses, pleasure, etc.
- Emotional temptation: "pleasant to the eyes." Something beautiful aesthetically, something that moves you.
- Spiritual temptation: "desired to make wise." An appeal to one's mind, intellect, pride. To have a special insight or vision.

John talks about these three areas of temptation:

For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world.

- I John 2:16

Jesus faced the same threefold temptations in the desert:

¹ Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led around by the Spirit in the wilderness ² for forty days, being tempted by the devil. And He ate nothing during those days, and when they had ended, He became hungry. ³ And the devil said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread." ⁴ And Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'Man shall not live on bread alone.'"

⁵ And he led Him up and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. ⁶ And the devil said to Him, "I will give You all this domain and its glory; for it has been handed over to me, and I give it to whomever I wish. ⁷ Therefore if You worship before me, it shall all be Yours." ⁸ Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God and serve

Him only."

⁹ And he led Him to Jerusalem and had Him stand on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down from here; ¹⁰ for it is written, 'He will command His angels concerning You to guard You,' ¹¹ and, 'On *their* hands they will bear You up, So that You will not strike Your foot against a stone.'"

¹² And Jesus answered and said to him, "It is said, 'You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.'"

- Luke 4:1-12

- Physical appetite: bread when hungry.
- Emotional desire: possession of world and kingdoms.
- Spiritual pride: special protection by the angels.

Eve was attacked at all three levels at once and she considered and pondered these things. What should she have done?

A. Stand firm with the armor of God (Ephesians 6:11)

A rebuke, a firm stand, not to compromise a stand based on the protection of God's armor which is the word and Spirit. Not a discussion or consideration or a negotiation but a firm stand.

Resist the devil and he will flee from you."

- James 4:7

B. Run away

Now flee from youthful lusts and pursue righteousness, faith, love *and* peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.

- II Timothy 2:22

Psychologists tell us that we have two basic reactions to danger and that is to fight or fly away. Depending on the circumstances and our assessment of the situation we choose one or the other. Sometimes the temptation is too great for our strength, sometimes we may be misunderstood. It is better to run away than risk being seduced.

Better a live dog than a dead lion.
- Ecclesiastes 9:4

Eve did neither of these. She did not make a strong stand nor run away for protection. She shopped, she admired, she considered, she said to herself, "Why not?"

Mistake #4 – She disobeyed (challenged)

she took from its fruit and ate
- Genesis 3:6b

No matter what Satan said, no matter how attracted she was, no matter how mixed up the serpent made the situation, the bottom line was that with her own mouth she had said that she understood what the instruction was: do not eat the fruit!

Here is where her will came into being. She chose to believe Satan regarding the situation rather than God. She liked his explanation of how things were more than what God said about how things are.

There was nothing in Eve that pushed her to sin, no weakness of flesh (like us) that led her to sin. She sinned because she chose to disregard God's word. Although her sin was more serious (she had received "much") it was not any different than our own today. We sin when we challenge God with our disobedience.

Mistake #5 – She led Adam to sin

and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate.
- Genesis 3:6c

As a prototype of all sinners, once Eve has sinned, she leads Adam to sin with her (misery loves company). She goes from being God's defender to Satan's helper. There are so many questions about this:

Why did Adam also eat?

Because he loved her; because he wanted to share her punishment; this would make Adam noble in sinning (this concept is not a Biblical one). We do not know what went through his mind other than the fact that he was not deceived like the woman (1 Timothy 2:14). All we know is that he also chose to disobey God. He probably had the same arguments put to him but by his wife rather than the serpent. Eve was deceived because Satan seduced her in the disguise of a serpent. Adam was convinced by the person he knew and loved. He may have thought all was lost anyway (disbelief and distrust of God). Either way the result was disobedience to God.

SUMMARY

Note that the five mistakes of Eve are a preview of the stages that each of us go through when we fall into temptation:

1. Failure to rebuke sin when it appears.

Sinfulness is usually attractive, desirable, or powerful and our lack of quick and decisive action at its first appearance is usually our downfall.

Effective rebuke requires three things:

- Knowledge of what is truly good and evil (Word knowledge)
- Conviction of our own position.

- Immediate response - call the spade a spade immediately. (e.g. gossip).

2. Compromising God's Word

When we want to sin and still remain Christians we simply change what God's Word really says. "Christian" homosexuals have their own theologians and commentaries and churches. If we want to continue our bad habits we simply "block out" the parts in the Bible that deal with them.

3. Considering the pleasure of sin

When we do not rebuke sin right away, what we end up doing is trying it on for size. Do not go for a test-drive if you are not going to buy the car because you are going to desire it if you try it out. That is the salesman's basic approach to get you hooked. Do not "play" with sin in your heart because soon you will be acting it out.

4. Consent

If we do not initially refuse to sin, we will eventually give in to it. There are only two ways to go: you do or you do not, and if you do not say NO then with time you will eventually say YES.

A winning strategy is to decide ahead of time that you will say no, then when you are faced with temptation you will not weaken yourself by considering the pros and cons, you will just say no!

5. Start a club

It is no fun to sin alone and so the next step is always to find a sympathetic partner who will let you sin in peace or who will join you. Romans 1:32 mentions this phenomena. Paul even says that the eventual state is that sinners, who know they are doing wrong, encourage others to do wrong and applaud them in their sins. This helps justify their position. Sin is the original problem and the method has always and will always be the same.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Summarize Genesis 3:1-6.
2. What was the basic sin committed by Adam and Eve and what was the motivation behind it?
3. What is the difference between the statement in Genesis 1:26, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness." and Satan's statement in Genesis 3:5, "you will be like God..."?
4. Compare the temptation of Adam and Eve with the temptation of Jesus from Matthew 4 and answer the following questions:
 - What are some similarities between the two events?
 - What did Jesus ultimately do to defeat Satan that Adam and Eve did not do?
5. Summarize each of the 5 mistakes Eve made in response to Satan's temptations.
6. How can you use this lesson to grow spiritually and help others come into a relationship with Jesus?

16.

The Judgment

GENESIS 3:2-16

In the previous chapter I said that Eve made five mistakes in falling into temptation which, in turn, provide a pattern for most sins.

1. Failure to rebuke sin when it appears

Sinfulness is usually attractive, desirable, or powerful and our lack of quick and decisive action at its first appearance usually leads to our downfall. An effective rebuke requires three things:

- Knowledge of what is truly good and evil (word knowledge)
- Conviction of our own position
- Immediate response

2. Compromising God's Word

Those who want to sin but also want to call themselves Christians simply change what God's Word really says to accommodate their disobedience. For example:

- "Christian" homosexuals have theologians, commentaries and churches that exclusively support their lifestyle choice.
- Those who want to continue their bad habits simply "block out" the parts in the Bible that deal with their sins.

3. Considering the pleasure of sin

When we do not rebuke sin right away we end up trying it on for size and this indecision usually leads to giving in to temptation.

4. Consent to sin

If we do not initially refuse to sin, we will eventually give in to it.

The objective is to decide ahead of time that you will say no, then when you are faced with temptation you will not weaken yourself by considering the pros and cons, you will just say no.

5. Start a club

It is no fun to sin alone and so the next step is always to find a sympathetic partner who will let you sin in peace or who will join you. Romans 1:32 mentions this phenomena. Paul says that sinners, who know they are doing wrong, encourage others to do wrong and applaud them in their sins.

Sin is the original problem and the method has always and will always be the same. One other thing we learn from this sequence is that sin has consequences.

CONSEQUENCES OF SIN

I would normally say that the next section is entitled the consequences of Adam's sin but there is not enough paper to list the individual consequences that resulted from this sin. Suffice to say that the two major consequences were that Paradise (a sinless place of joy) was lost and the world (the physical universe) was lost.

Genesis records, in sequence, the consequences and events that took place after their disobedience:

1. Shame

Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked;
- Genesis 3:7a

They knew from experience (they tasted the fruit) the knowledge of good and evil. They had experienced good and now were experiencing evil. Their experience was the shame that comes from knowingly disobeying God.

Why was their nakedness the focal point of their shame? Their sin was not a sexual one. One idea is that they realized that as "head" of the human race, they had corrupted the future generations by their sin. This realization centered itself around their reproductive organs which symbolized future generations.

Another idea is that they realized that they could not hide their sin and their nakedness was a reminder of this. Either way, the Bible says that they felt embarrassment and shame for having done wrong.

2. Guilt

...and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin coverings.
- Genesis 3:7b

The fact that they tried to cover themselves means that they felt guilty. They knew that they had done wrong and felt badly about it, which is probably what saved them. Had they been proud, like Satan, God could have destroyed them there and then.

Note that they tried to cover themselves and this is always inadequate. They covered themselves but were still afraid. When God covers you, you do not have to be afraid anymore.

3. Fear

⁸ They heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. ⁹ Then the Lord God called to the man, and said to him, "Where are you?" ¹⁰ He said, "I heard the sound of You in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid myself."

- Genesis 3:8-10

Shame and guilt produce fear. Fear because a feature of man's conscience (where his will operates) is that man intuitively knows that sin equals punishment. God said that disobedience brings death and that knowledge is part of man's psyche (Romans 1:28-32).

The normal fellowship between Adam and God did not include sin. Adam knew God's will concerning sin and, consequently, was afraid of the judgement he knew would come.

He was not afraid because of his physical nakedness, he was afraid because his nakedness now reminded him of sin and sin reminded him of death.

4. More sin

¹¹ And He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" ¹² The man said, "The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me from the tree, and I ate." ¹³ Then the Lord God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?" And the woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."

- Genesis 3:11-13

It does not take long for sin to multiply itself. Immediately Adam begins to show signs of his moral deterioration. When asked about the tree, instead of confessing and asking for forgiveness, Adam does two things:

blames his wife and blames God. Instead of praising God for His goodness, he blames Him for his troubles!

When posed with the same question, Eve does not acknowledge guilt and ask for forgiveness either, she blames the serpent and offers the excuse that she was deceived.

Sin has already reduced them to denying their own guilt and blinded them to God's goodness. They do not appeal to Him for help.

5. Judgment

The first thing they learn about evil is that it always results in judgment and punishment by God. God pronounces judgment in the same order in which the sin proceeded: Satan, Eve, and then Adam.

A. Satan is judged

¹⁴ The Lord God said to the serpent,
"Because you have done this,
Cursed are you more than all cattle,
And more than every beast of the field;
On your belly you will go,
And dust you will eat
All the days of your life;
¹⁵ And I will put enmity
Between you and the woman,
And between your seed and her seed;
He shall bruise you on the head,
And you shall bruise him on the heel."
- Genesis 3:14-15

The snake's posture (whatever it may have been before) will now be that of one slithering in the dust, trampled by other animals. This is the imagery of the position of Satan who once was an angel, now will be hated, cause fear and repulsion, as the snake now does in normal circumstances.

We get a glimpse of Satan's original plan when we hear the curse. There is special emphasis on Satan's inability from here forward to dominate woman and the offspring she will bear (which was probably the reason why he attacked her) to dominate her and control her children for his own purposes.

God says that there will be war, not subjection, between the woman, her children and Satan. This struggle will end with the seed of woman destroying the seed of Satan. It is interesting to note that in the Bible, men have seed, not women, and spirit beings have no seed. Spirits do not procreate, only humans do this.

The seed of woman is Jesus who was conceived without a human male. The seed of Satan is the "man of lawlessness, the anti-Christ" to whom Satan gives power and who will be destroyed by Christ's coming (II Thessalonians 2:8)

The "bruising" is a blow. For the woman's seed, the blow will be on the heel (the inferior part of the body), this is Satan's attack that resulted in the human death of Christ that was only temporary. For Satan's seed, the blow will be to the head, the superior part of the body and thus, fatal.

Jesus, when He returns, destroys death, and pronounces judgment on Satan who is thrown into the "pit" forever.

B. Eve is judged

To the woman He said,
"I will greatly multiply
Your pain in childbirth,
In pain you will bring forth children;
Yet your desire will be for your husband,
And he will rule over you."
- Genesis 3:16

Both Adam and Eve were painlessly brought into a perfect and sinless world. Because of this sin, the creating of future society would be marked

by pain. Because of their sin, death enters the world, and pain at childbirth becomes the constant reminder of this fact.

Before sin, man and woman enjoyed co-rulership over creation. Because of sin, this perfect balance was upset, and God established a rule of law in the area of leadership. The husband would rule and be the head of the family unit.

This concept is repeated and confirmed in the New Testament (I Corinthians 11:3, Ephesians 5:22-24). There have been many abuses of this situation, but the Bible clarifies the loving relationship that is to exist within this situation (Ephesians 5:25; 28-30).

There is also mercy in God's judgment over Eve. She will not desire the serpent and his promises but will return her focus to her husband. The pain of childbirth will not overcome her love of husband and family. There will be a limit to her suffering.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. From the text provided for this lesson, summarize the pattern for most sin and how this compares to James 1:14-15.
2. Summarize the sequence of events following sin from Genesis 3:6-13 and the results from their sin.
3. What was the judgment brought on those who were involved in the original sin?
4. How can you use this lesson to grow spiritually and help others come into a relationship with Jesus?

17.

Paradise Lost

GENESIS 3:17-24

In previous chapters we have examined the effects of sin and the consequences of Adam and Eve's disobedience. These were:

1. **Shame** - Their disobedience caused them to feel shame and they tried to cover their nakedness as a way of dealing with that shame.
2. **Guilt** - They knew they did wrong and felt guilty about that.
3. **Fear** - Shame and guilt lead to fear. Fear of punishment they knew they deserved.
4. **More sin** - Their original disobedience led them to increased sin (denial, accusations against God).
5. **Judgment** - God judges everyone and so Satan and Eve received judgment for their actions.

Satan was condemned and his bid to overpower humanity was denied by the promise that God would send a savior who would ultimately destroy him. Note that Satan's defeat is outlined and promised at the very beginning of the Bible and confirmed at the end.

Eve's birthing experience would not be a joyful reproduction of generations into a perfect world but rather a painful experience of sin and death. She would also lose her co-rulership position with man and be in

submission to her husband and yet, in His mercy, God granted that these two effects would not destroy her love for her husband and family.

At this point, God turns to Adam who bears the brunt of the judgment in comparison to Eve.

THE JUDGMENT OF MAN

¹⁷ Then to Adam He said, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree about which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat from it'; Cursed is the ground because of you;

In toil you will eat of it
All the days of your life.

¹⁸ "Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you;
And you will eat the plants of the field;

¹⁹ By the sweat of your face
You will eat bread,
Till you return to the ground,
Because from it you were taken;
For you are dust,
And to dust you shall return."

- Genesis 3:17-19

First, God outlines the sin. Adam listened to his wife (he changed his allegiance) and not to the Word of God. Loyalty to the Word should be stronger than any human tie including marriage. Eve did not deceive him, she convinced him (i.e. what harm could it do; only this once; I did it and nothing happened, etc.) In the end, the plain truth is that Adam did what God said not to do.

God then pronounces the judgment on Adam. Since he is the head of the race, the judgment, by extension, will affect all of his descendants. Because of what he has done, God must now remove Himself and this will affect man. God is holy, sinless and cannot dwell where there is sin and immorality. Until Adam and Eve sinned, God maintained the balance for life in the physical world by His presence.

Adam and Eve lived in a perfect world where God maintained this perfection through His power. There was no deterioration, no overpopulation and no imbalances. However, once sin entered the world, God removed His presence and permitted the cycle of deterioration to take place.

This was the reality of good and evil warned against. The deterioration, not permitted before, was now released. Mutations that caused decay began to form. Even in man, the cycle of deterioration would now cause his physical death. Of course, this was still before the Great Flood so the rate of decay and the level of imbalance were slow. This explains why people lived such long lives during that time. However, once the flood destroyed the world, man's lifespan shortened and the rate of decay accelerated.

Genesis explains the symptoms and features of a declining world where God is no longer extending His power to maintain a "steady state" of life and order thus allowing all things to gradually disintegrate toward disorder and death.

God did not create death. He merely removed His life sustaining power and allowed His creation to disintegrate, which is what it would naturally do without the original life force that gave it existence to begin with. This concept of deterioration was universally observed and scientifically formulated about 100 years ago (Carnot, Clausius, Kelvin and others). It was called the Second Law of Thermodynamics.

This law states that all systems, if left to themselves, become degraded or disordered. All systems, whether they be watches or suns, eventually wear out. Even modern scientists are reconfirming this law with new equipment (i.e. Hubble telescope). Instead of all things being "made" (organized into complex systems, as they were during creation week), they are now being "unmade" (becoming disorganized and simple). This is what is wrong with our world and the reason for its deterioration.

Let us get back to the passage in Genesis and its language. "Cursed is the ground" is the reverse of "it is very good." The difference here is that God no longer maintains it. The curse is that God now removes His sustaining

power. "For thy sake" refers to God's mercy. God removes His sustaining power not only as a response to sin but also to put a limit on the wickedness resulting from sin. Better suffering and death accompanying sin than unchecked rebellion and a never-ending multiplication of wicked people using the creation for sinful purposes. Once sin was in, God had to intervene.

The curse on the earth is followed by the result that it would have on man:

1. **Sorrow**, continual disappointment and futility in life, especially in providing for oneself.
2. **Pain and suffering** signified by the thorns and thistles.
3. **Hard work**. Before, man ate of the abundance of the garden. Now, he would have to scratch a living from an uncooperative earth.
4. **Death**. With all of his work and effort, man would, like the rest of the creation, deteriorate into the primary elements from which he was taken, the earth itself.

This was the result of the curse on Adam. It is interesting to note that Jesus experienced every one of these elements when, as the Bible says, "He bore the curse on our behalf." (Galatians 3:13).

1. He was the man of sorrows – Isaiah 53:3
2. He wore the curse as a crown of thorns - Mark 15:17
3. His work and labor made Him sweat, but His sweat came out as drops of blood - Luke 22:44
4. Finally, God brought Him into the "dust of death" - Psalm 22:15

God placed a curse on the earth by withdrawing Himself and thus allowing the world and man to disintegrate into death. However, He did not leave the world without hope. That hope was that one day He would create a new heaven and a new earth which would never be destroyed by sin and where He would dwell eternally with His people.

Paradise lost

Now that the judgment was pronounced there was a response from Adam and Eve.

Now the man called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all *the* living.
- Genesis 3:20

Adam renames his wife. Originally, he had named her "woman". This term signified that she was part of him, equal and similar in nature. Now he gives her another name that will signify several other things:

1. The word Eve means "life-giver." It signified that they were going to obey God's command to multiply upon the earth.
2. This response also showed that they believed God's promise to bring salvation through the seed of the woman. By bearing children despite pain, woman was expressing her belief that the savior would ultimately come.
3. God renews His relationship with man, not based on perfection anymore, but based on faith. Because they believe God's promise expressed in their intention to procreate, Adam and Eve are saved.

In response to their faith, expressed in obedience, God provides a covering for their shame, guilt, and nakedness.

The Lord God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife, and clothed them.
- Genesis 3:21

Note that animals were sacrificed in order to provide this covering. This is the first preview indicating how redemption would ultimately come: the blood of the innocent to cover the sins of the guilty.

Then the Lord God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of Us, knowing good and evil; and now, he might stretch out his hand, and take also from the tree of life, and eat, and live forever."

- Genesis 3:22

Man now knows experientially both good (fellowship with God and perfect creation) as well as evil (separation from God and the punishment associated with evil). This is the reverse of others after him who experience evil first, and then when saved, experience fellowship with God and perfection through faith.

Adam is now weakened by sin and, although repentant and saved, can still be tempted to eat of the tree of life, the result being that he would continue to exist in the sin-state forever. Perhaps this is what Satan did and why there is no salvation for him.

²³ therefore the Lord God sent him out from the garden of Eden, to cultivate the ground from which he was taken. ²⁴ So He drove the man out; and at the east of the garden of Eden He stationed the cherubim and the flaming sword which turned every direction to guard the way to the tree of life.

- Genesis 3:23-24

The wording suggests that Adam was reluctant to leave and so God does two things to guarantee the carrying out of His judgment.

1. He drives the man and his wife out of his new home, work and status.
2. He puts two angels and a flaming sword to protect access to the tree of life. The tree is preserved for a future time. The sword signifies that you cannot get to it without physical death.

The remaining story of the Bible will describe how God worked in order to bring man to the point where he could again reach out and eat of the tree of life.

He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will grant to eat of the tree of life which is in the Paradise of God.'

- Revelation 2:7

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Summarize God's judgment on Adam from Genesis 3:17-19.
2. Read James 4:7 and I Corinthians 10:13. What do these verses teach about temptation and how does this relate to the sin of Adam and Eve?
3. Describe the impact on creation before and after sin.
4. List the curses God placed on the earth and man as a result of sin.
5. What is the significance of renaming Eve?
6. What was a specific action of God to cover Adam and Eve's shame for their sin and what is its significance?
7. What was the ultimate action God of judgment of Adam and Eve (Genesis 3:22-24)?
8. How can you use this lesson to grow spiritually and help others come into a relationship with Jesus?

18.

Cain and Abel

GENESIS 4:1-8

In our last lesson we finished the section of Genesis that explained the fall of man.

1. God set forth His command: obey and live, disobey and die.
2. Man disobeyed and suffered the various consequences of death: sorrow, pain, alienation from his environment (that is why he had to work), final decomposition of his body and separation from his soul.
3. God offers a glimpse of the salvation to come and we see Adam and Eve respond to this hope.
 - They begin to have children which is a sign that they believe God's promise that salvation will come through a human form in the future.
 - They are removed from the garden to live out their lives away from the presence of God.

The next section describes the beginning of the fall of the world now inhabited by sinful man.

THE MURDER OF ABEL – 4:1-8

As we discussed earlier, the fact that Eve had children despite the suffering is a sign that she (along with Adam) believed the promise of God to send a savior through her seed. We will see, however, that Satan's initial attempt to control the woman and dominate her seed will continue to the next generation and result in the poisoning of one child and the death of another.

The "seed" of Satan will murder the "seed" of woman in an attempt to continue to dominate but God will continue the "seed" with other children. Yet another image of the ultimate scenario of the death and resurrection of Jesus.

Now the man had relations with his wife Eve, and she conceived and gave birth to Cain, and she said, "I have gotten a manchild with *the help of the Lord*."

- Genesis 4:1

Some versions use the word "*knew*" as a euphemism for sexual intimacy and transparency in marital love. The name "Cain" means **gotten** in reference to the fact that Eve was joyful that she was able to "beget" or bear a child – God's promise fulfilled. It is significant to note that the first human created was a man, the first human conceived was a man, and the first human resurrected to eternal life was in a man's body.

Eve's joy may have also been based on the fact that she thought that this person (Cain) might be the deliverer.

Again, she gave birth to his brother Abel. And Abel was a keeper of flocks, but Cain was a tiller of the ground.

- Genesis 4:2

It is interesting to note that Abel's name means "vapor" or "vanity". Some reasons for this:

- Eve began to experience the results of sin in her life and saw what God meant by the curse.
- Cain began to demonstrate sinful tendencies and Eve recognized the vanity or shortness of a life with death as its natural end.
- She could have been predicting the shortness of Abel's life.

In chapter 5:4, it says that Adam and Eve had other sons and daughters (after all, their role was to populate the earth) and so they continued to have children who themselves had children, etc. This becomes forbidden later on in history because of social and physical reasons, but in this situation it was neither dangerous nor against God's will. This was how Cain and others began families. The Bible mentions the occupations of each.

Abel was a shepherd since sheep were needed to provide two things at least:

1. Clothing (skins for clothing).
2. Sacrifice

We have no direct instructions but obviously animal sacrifice was being practiced and the example of sacrificial death was established by God when He provided for Adam and Eve's coverings when they left the Garden. It was the primary form of worship from the very beginning.

Cain was a farmer like his father Adam. This was necessary because until this time the produce from the ground was the only form of food authorized. Only in Genesis 9:3 did God authorize the use of animals for food. Before this, He authorized only the use of fruits and vegetables (Genesis 1:29; Genesis 2:16; Genesis 3:19).

We do not have a timeframe here for the events that take place. Centuries could have gone by as the population grew and society developed.

Statisticians tell us that if people were healthy and had normal amounts of children for extended periods (which they did back then) then the population would be approximately 150,000 in Cain's lifetime.

The Bible only traces the life of key persons at the beginning of time, not all individuals. It only makes passing references to the development of society. In this section, it describes key events and moments in the lives of Cain and Abel without reference to time or social development.

³ So it came about in the course of time that Cain brought an offering to the Lord of the fruit of the ground. ⁴ Abel, on his part also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of their fat portions. And the Lord had regard for Abel and for his offering; ⁵ but for Cain and for his offering He had no regard. So Cain became very angry and his countenance fell.
- Genesis 4:3-5

There could be various ways of interpreting these verses:

1. The first time they offered a sacrifice, one did with fruit of the ground, the other with animals.
2. Originally only animal sacrifices were offered by everyone but one day Cain decided to offer something different.
3. These kinds of sacrifices were always offered but something in Cain's attitude changed.

Either way you look at it, the end result is the same: God was pleased with one and displeased with the other.

I used to think that God was displeased with Cain's attitude only and others thought God disliked the offering only but a close look shows that God had "no respect" for both Cain and his sacrifice. There are other places in the Bible that comment on this passage and shed light on why God rejected Cain's offering and was pleased with Abel's.

so that upon you may fall *the guilt of* all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar.

- Matthew 23:35

This passage says that Abel was a righteous man and his was innocent blood shed, he did not deserve to die.

⁴⁹ For this reason also the wisdom of God said, 'I will send to them prophets and apostles, and *some* of them they will kill and *some* they will persecute, ⁵⁰ so that the blood of all the prophets, shed since the foundation of the world, may be charged against this generation, ⁵¹ from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, who was killed between the altar and the house *of God*; yes, I tell you, it shall be charged against this generation.'

- Luke 11:49-51

Abel was a prophet, he spoke God's word.

By faith Abel offered to God a better sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained the testimony that he was righteous, God testifying about his gifts, and through faith, though he is dead, he still speaks.

- Hebrews 11:4

Abel's sacrifice was better than Cain's because it was offered in faith.

- The fact that he was righteous and faithful suggests that what and how he was offering sacrifice was in accordance to the will and direction of God.
- This also may indicate the reason why Cain's offering was rejected: he was not a righteous man, his sacrifice not in accordance with God's will.

God informs Cain and Abel about their respective sacrifices (maybe Abel, as a prophet, was charged to tell his brother about his sacrifice and attitude).

There is no description of Abel's reaction but Cain becomes angry. His countenance or "glance" had been high or proud, now it falls and with it comes anger and resentment. This anger and resentment become directed at Abel because he represents all the things lacking in his own life: righteousness, faith, peace and joy with God.

⁶ Then the Lord said to Cain, "Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? ⁷ If you do well, will not *your countenance* be lifted up? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door; and its desire is for you, but you must master it."

- Genesis 4:6-7

Abel has tried to warn him and now God warns Cain about the danger ahead.

1. Face the problem

You are angry, depressed. There is a reason for this. Do not just dwell and simmer in the emotion, find out why you feel this way.

2. Acknowledge your fault

The reason he was angry was because God had rejected his sacrifice but the reason for that was because he had not done well (disobeyed, done it the wrong way, had the wrong attitude). Face the real issue, not the one you have made up (it was God's fault, God was not fair, my brother thinks he is better than me, etc.)

not as Cain, *who* was of the evil one and slew his brother. And for what reason did he slay him? Because his deeds were evil, and his brother's were righteous.

- I John 3:12

This was the **real** issue.

3. Deal with sin

Not only had he messed up but he was about to make a larger mistake because of it. If he did not "rule" over sin, then sin would rule over him.

You cannot eliminate sin from your life experience (always tempted, affected by, fall into it) but you can contain it. If you do not, it contains you. How to deal with this? Face the sin issues in your life. Acknowledge them. Deal with them. Ask for forgiveness, change your ways. Seek help to minimize the occurrence.

You cannot just **ignore** sin.

Cain told Abel his brother. And it came about when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother and killed him.
- Genesis 4:8

What do you think that they spoke about in the field? Accusations by Cain; encouragement to repent by Abel.

Some ancient texts add a sentence that suggests that Cain drew Abel out into the field (where no one would see him) in order to kill him. In any event the sequence of disobedience, unfaithfulness, jealousy, anger, resentment finally leads to murder just like Jesus says that it does in Matthew 5:22.

So, we see the pollution of the created world and society begin with the murder of Abel. Innocent blood is spilled into the ground. Satan's attack, begun with the woman, continues as the first seed to have the promise of salvation is killed.

- Cain's descendants, we will see, will not call upon God. They will multiply sin.

- God, however, will furnish another son to Eve and this line will begin calling upon God and eventually produce the Savior.

FINAL LESSONS

1. Sin is in the world and we have to deal with it or it overtakes us.
2. God provides us with resources and opportunities to deal with sin. (He offered to take Cain back if he did right). We fight Him off because we are mad, afraid, ashamed, etc.
3. Satan cannot destroy the plan of God. He killed Abel but God raised up another "seed". He will kill our bodies but God will raise us up a new seed in Christ.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Summarize the events of Genesis 4:1-8.
2. Describe how the punishment of Cain relates to the concept that God's plan continues even when we, through our sin, work against it and the implications for us.
3. What are some reasons Cain sinned and the implication for us?
4. Read Genesis 4:6-7, Ephesians 4:26-27, and Matthew 5:22 and answer the following questions:
 - What is the danger of harboring anger?
 - What are some potential actions we cannot take if we harbor anger?
 - Describe situations where anger is appropriate.
5. Discuss the following statements on how to deal with sin:
 - Face the problem.
 - Acknowledge your fault.
 - Deal with the sin.
6. Summarize what Jesus teaches us about dealing with a sin between fellow believers from Matthew 18:15-17.
7. How can you use this lesson to grow spiritually and help others come into a relationship with Jesus?

19.

The Punishment of Cain

GENESIS 4:9-24

We have the story of Adam and Eve developing on four levels simultaneously, like four camera angles:

1. **The close-up of the first family.** - Creation, disobedience, effects on their family: loss of Garden home; loss of relationship with God; conflict between brothers and death.
2. **The beginning of the deterioration of the world. (Society)** - It is slow at first, merely a harder task of drawing a living from the earth. The disintegration of the family because of murder and later we will see new patterns of social breakdown because of polygamy.
3. **The first mention and the tracking of God's promise of salvation. (Seed of promise)** - God's promise to Eve regarding her offspring. A witness that that promise was believed as we see Abel offering sacrifice (acceptable sacrifice) to God.
4. **The war between the seed of the woman and the seed of Satan. (War of the seeds)** - The on-going struggle for dominance over man in every generation. The woman deceived. Cain seduced to anger and murder.

Each generation will see this struggle continue until Christ comes (the seed) and wins a final victory (crushes the head of Satan) by resurrecting from the dead:

¹⁴ Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, ¹⁵ and might free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives.
- Hebrews 2:14-15

The struggle continues today with the "seed" but it is to lure us away from the truth. The actual battle has been fought and won at the cross. If we fail now, it is because we believe the lie and disregard the truth.

We now continue in chapter 4 and see the result of Cain's act and how God deals with him. We will then move on to observe a wider level of society and its development.

CAIN'S JUDGMENT – 4:9-15

⁹ Then the Lord said to Cain, "Where is Abel your brother?"
And he said, "I do not know. Am I my brother's keeper?"

At first God had met Cain at the sacrifice altar. Now there is no sacrifice, no worship. (Sin dulls our interest and desire for worship.) God finds Cain to deal with him. God does not need information but like Adam and Eve, He opens up the question in order to elicit from Cain an attitude of repentance. Obviously, Cain has not come to Him to confess and ask for mercy. Cain responds in two ways:

1. He lies – he says he does not know.
2. He challenges God – he challenges God's right to question him. He is not **my** responsibility, he is Yours!

¹⁰ He said, "What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood is crying to Me from the ground.

God is no longer going to speak to him in mercy, now it will be judgment that will come forth. Abel is not there but God's law, through Abel's blood,

must be satisfied. The blood appeals to God for justice. An eye for an eye. In Genesis 9:6 God will articulate the law on capital punishment.

¹¹ Now you are cursed from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand.

¹² When you cultivate the ground, it will no longer yield its strength to you; you will be a vagrant and a wanderer on the earth."

- Genesis 4:11-12

In this case God does not execute the punishment due immediately but lists the consequence of this sin in his life.

1. The land, which was already difficult will no longer respond to him because he shed innocent blood.
 - A nation always pays a price for shedding innocent blood.
 - For example, do not think America will not pay a price for all the babies aborted.
2. He will become a wanderer.
 - He is allowed to live but his life would be an unpleasant one.
 - A state of restlessness. Buddhists claim that this is the essential problem with man. All their teaching and training (yoga) is to deal with this problem.
 - God does not execute him, He imposes a life sentence on him instead.
 - The state has a right to do both.

Perhaps a reason for this punishment is that Cain would be a visible reminder of the effects of sin and God's justice.

¹³ Cain said to the Lord, "My punishment is too great to bear!

Cain finally cries out for help. He is less proud and rebellious and comes to grips with the punishment he must bear.

¹⁴ Behold, You have driven me this day from the face of the ground; and from Your face I will be hidden, and I will be a vagrant and a wanderer on the earth, and whoever finds me will kill me."

He reviews the punishment and in his words we see the third and most painful part of the curse on him.

3. He will no longer behold the face of the Lord. No longer will he commune with the Lord as he did in the past. Before he was rebellious and arrogant but at least there was a relationship, now even this is taken away. Sin always separates us from God.

4. It seems that the people of this time knew the law of justice for killing and Cain saw his life as being a constant fugitive from those in society who would "justly" take his life to satisfy innocent blood. After all, Abel was known and loved as a righteous man.

¹⁵ So the Lord said to him, "Therefore whoever kills Cain, vengeance will be taken on him sevenfold." And the Lord appointed a sign for Cain, so that no one finding him would slay him.

To guarantee that his life would be spared (if God did not execute him, He would not let anyone else execute him), God gave him a sign, a mark. The Hebrew word is "sign". We do not know what it was but with time others knew of God's provision for Cain (Genesis 4:24) and so the sign must have been effective.

It seems from what we know about Cain's later life that even the sign he had did not give him peace of mind and he did indeed wander and left the ground for living in cities.

THE WAY OF CAIN

From the close-up perspective featuring the relationship of Cain and God, the story now refocuses on the development and deterioration of society.

Remember this is the world **before** the flood in an environment where both nature and man are relatively free from illness and the harmful environmental factors that cause decay. Most of archeology deals with events and artifacts present after the flood.

¹⁶ Then Cain went out from the presence of the Lord, and settled in the land of Nod, east of Eden.

The word "NOD" means wandering and so it could suggest that Cain left the proximate area of the Garden and began to wander; or lived in a place called Nod but lived as a nomad without fixed roots.

¹⁷ Cain had relations with his wife and she conceived, and gave birth to Enoch; and he built a city, and called the name of the city Enoch, after the name of his son.

Cain now begins his family line. The sign is fulfilling its purpose, he lives long enough to produce children.

Cain's wife was related to him obviously but in that time it was genetically possible, socially necessary (how else?), and morally acceptable (God said to multiply and this was the only way).

I believe that this was the manner since Genesis 5:2 says that Adam and Eve were the first and only persons created, this is the only option. We see this interfamily relationship in these early times in others (Abraham marries his half-sister; Lot's daughters conceive through their father). He builds (or begins to build because the verb here is indefinite, *building*) a city. Perhaps an effort to stabilize his own wandering life. The city is named after his son, Enoch, who becomes the first city dweller, and is left to him to rule the city and continue to live.

¹⁸ Now to Enoch was born Irad, and Irad became the father of Mehujael, and Mehujael became the father of Methushael, and Methushael became the father of Lamech.

The Cain family line is described here to provide a time bridge to Lamech, a significant person in Cain's lineage.

¹⁹ Lamech took to himself two wives: the name of the one was Adah, and the name of the other, Zillah.

Lamech is the first recorded one to begin polygamy, a direct disobedience of God's law regarding marriage.

- The names of his wives mean ornament and shadow, suggesting their beauty and his attraction.
- Of course, the reason for this may not have been sexual lust, but the desire to have a larger family faster, guaranteeing safety and prosperity of numbers.

²⁰ Adah gave birth to Jubal; he was the father of those who dwell in tents and *have* livestock. ²¹ His brother's name was Jubal; he was the father of all those who play the lyre and pipe. ²² As for Zillah, she also gave birth to Tubal-cain, the forger of all implements of bronze and iron; and the sister of Tubal-cain was Naamah.
– Genesis 4:20-22

We get a glimpse of the origins of various social developments as they take place in this era:

1. **Jabal** invents tents that allow nomads to take their home with them and also the keeping of cattle for commercial purposes.
2. **Jubal** which means "sound". His ability produced both stringed and reed instruments and the development of this art.

3. **Tubal-cain.** We are not sure of his name but he developed metal uses and products.

The descendants of Cain no longer farmed but began to earn their living through commerce and manufacturing (in a basic way) and they were the prototype for those who live in the cities today.

Henry Morris says that man's attempt to thwart God's curse is illustrated by the development of Cain's descendants ending with the 7th generation of Lamech.

1. Urban life is now preferred over tilling the ground and eating from it.
2. Nomadic life preferred over settled life.
3. Cattle raising now developed to satisfy man's appetite for meat in rejection of God's command regarding vegetation for food.
4. Metal working developed to ease the "curse" of toil.
5. Musical instruments used to mitigate sorrow.
6. Polygamy introduced to gain advantage and social class.
7. Metallic weapons introduced to guarantee position or establish it.
8. Writing and art used to rail against God and provoke Him.

We see this in the oldest poetry recorded, Lamech's poem:

²³ Lamech said to his wives,
"Adah and Zillah,
Listen to my voice,
You wives of Lamech,
Give heed to my speech,
For I have killed a man for wounding me;

And a boy for striking me;
²⁴ If Cain is avenged sevenfold,
Then Lamech seventy-sevenfold."
- Genesis 4:23-24

- He boasts of his strength as a warrior and the fact that he has killed someone for attacking him.
- He boasts that he is greater than his ancestor Cain because God would only avenge Cain's killer seven times.
- Anyone attacking him would receive back 70 times that much.

In these developments we see the "seed" of Cain (influenced by Satan) and the steady deterioration not only of one man, but of the society as well. They are looking less and less like the people in the Garden and seven generations later are actually producing blasphemous poetry.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Summarize the event of Cain's sin from Genesis 4.
2. What was Cain's reaction to God's question regarding Abel and how does this relate to the immediate impact of sin on our relationship with God?
3. Summarize Cain's punishment and its impact on him.
4. Why did God allow intermarriage between family members and polygamy?
5. Read Genesis 4:17-22 and summarize the different ways the descendants of Cain changed life.
6. Why does God allow the writers of scripture to include the sins and weaknesses of mankind?
7. Read Genesis 3:11-13 and Genesis 4:9 and answer the following questions:
 - What are the similarities between the reaction of Adam and Eve when God confronted them for their sin, and the reaction of Cain when he was confronted?
 - Defend the idea that if Adam and Eve or Cain had responded differently by repenting before God that God would have forgiven them rather than punish them.
 - What does the example of Adam, Eve, and Cain's reaction teach us?
8. Compare Cain's statement in Genesis 4:13-14 and that of our Lord in Matthew 27:46.
9. How can you use this lesson to grow spiritually and help others come into a relationship with Jesus?

20.

Seed of Promise

GENESIS 4:25-5:32

The information in Genesis is given to us at different levels. Like a camera taking pictures from different vantage points:

1. **Close-up** - An intimate look at the situation that features dialogue, thoughts and feelings experienced by the individuals.
2. **Social** - A wide view of society at large as it begins to disintegrate due to the sin, Adam, Eve, and then Cain.
3. **Seed of promise** - A long view of God's work in preparing the world for the coming of Christ, like a thread or storyline that the book comes back to over again.
4. **War of the seeds** - An ongoing view of the continual battle between the seed of Satan (those who opposed God, unbelievers) and the seed of the woman (those who were part of the line that would ultimately bring Jesus to earth).

In our last chapter, we went from a close-up of Cain and his punishment to a wide view of the result of his wickedness in society. Now we begin

with a final close-up view of Adam and Eve, and then a long view of the seed of promise.

THE SEED OF PROMISE – 4:25-26

The story now changes its focus from the description of the seed of Satan to the natural development of society.

The emphasis is not on human boasting and accomplishment (how man is coping in the world with God). Man can and has done great things without faith in God. God permits and even provides for these, which is a demonstration of His love and patience.

The Scriptures now describe another kind of man, one who calls upon the name of the Lord. This will be the beginning of the development of the "seed of woman," "seed of promise." The view will shift from society at large and focus on the line of people through whom God will fulfill His promise.

The world is going on and discoveries are being made, kings and nations will rise and fall (all documented by archaeologists and historians), and the Bible will mention these but mostly it will follow the story of the development of the "seed of woman" and the eventual coming of Christ.

²⁵ Adam had relations with his wife again; and she gave birth to a son, and named him Seth, for, *she said*, "God has appointed me another offspring in place of Abel, for Cain killed him."

The word Seth means "appointed" or "substituted" and this indicates what Adam and Eve believed this son represented in their lives. A replacement for Abel, another person through whom the promise would be fulfilled. Note that this time Eve names the child and not Adam.

²⁶ To Seth, to him also a son was born; and he called his name Enosh. Then *men* began to call upon the name of the Lord.

The Bible does not say what Seth did, who his wife was, etc., only that he had a son (one of many) but one particular son during whose life an important change was to take place.

Enosh means "mortal frailty". This could suggest that during his time he began to recognize the fragility of life and the certainty of death.

- The story of the Garden
- The diminished abilities
- The death of Abel
- The growing hostility in society.

It is during his time that men begin to call upon the Lord. They are aware of a spiritual need, and the absence of God among them drives men to begin to offer worship and prayers to God.

This is a close-up view of Adam and Eve as they continue faithfully following after the Lord. Their faith is rewarded with a child who not only replaced Abel but one who would help them maintain their hope of salvation.

THE GENERATIONS OF ADAM

I said Genesis could be divided in various ways:

1. Overview division
 - Creation – 1-11
 - Chosen people – 12-50
2. Generational division

There are nine Generations of people who actually wrote the book. This is a much more natural division.

- Generations of heaven and earth – 1:1-2:4
- Generation of Adam – 2:4-5:1
- Generation of Noah – 5:1-6:9

- Generations of the sons of Noah – 6:9-10:1
- Generations of the sons of Shem – 10:1-11:10

Note that the story turns to follow the line of the seed and ignores the other 2 genealogies (Ham and Japheth)

- Generations of Terah – 11:10-11:27
- Generations of Isaac – 11:27-25:29
- Generations of Jacob – 25:29-37:2
- Generations of the sons of Jacob – 37:2-Exodus 1:1

In Genesis 5:1 we see the end of the writings provided by Adam concerning his times and the development of the seed of woman.

^{1a} This is the book of the generations of Adam.

Note that the verse says, "...the book..." suggesting that there were not just oral traditions but that Adam wrote his information and left it for his sons. They were recording God's dealings with them from the very beginning and preserving them for future generations.

It is a summary of Adam's life from his beginning and as the verse says, the book describing the "generations" or origins of Adam.

^{1b} In the day when God created man, He made him in the likeness of God. ² He created them male and female, and He blessed them and named them Man in the day when they were created.

This passage begins the section prepared by another writer (Noah). He summarizes the life of Adam from his creation in the Garden. This provides a direct "link" between what has happened in the past and what the present writer will be recording.

³ When Adam had lived one hundred and thirty years, he became the father of *a son* in his own likeness, according to

his image, and named him Seth. ⁴ Then the days of Adam after he became the father of Seth were eight hundred years, and he had *other* sons and daughters. ⁵ So all the days that Adam lived were nine hundred and thirty years, and he died.

After summarizing his life and establishing the link between what has been written and the present story, the writer pronounces Adam's obituary statement. Having Seth at 130 years does not mean they had no other children before this. It simply means that the one through whom the "promise" would come (because that is what the Bible is tracking) was born when Adam was 130 years of age. Adam dies at 930 years of age.

⁶ Seth lived one hundred and five years, and became the father of Enosh. ⁷ Then Seth lived eight hundred and seven years after he became the father of Enosh, and he had *other* sons and daughters. ⁸ So all the days of Seth were nine hundred and twelve years, and he died.

⁹ Enosh lived ninety years, and became the father of Kenan.

¹⁰ Then Enosh lived eight hundred and fifteen years after he became the father of Kenan, and he had *other* sons and daughters. ¹¹ So all the days of Enosh were nine hundred and five years, and he died.

¹² Kenan lived seventy years, and became the father of Mahalalel. ¹³ Then Kenan lived eight hundred and forty years after he became the father of Mahalalel, and he had *other* sons and daughters. ¹⁴ So all the days of Kenan were nine hundred and ten years, and he died.

¹⁵ Mahalalel lived sixty-five years, and became the father of Jared. ¹⁶ Then Mahalalel lived eight hundred and thirty years after he became the father of Jared, and he had *other* sons and daughters. ¹⁷ So all the days of Mahalalel were eight hundred and ninety-five years, and he died.

¹⁸ Jared lived one hundred and sixty-two years, and became the father of Enoch. ¹⁹ Then Jared lived eight hundred years after he became the father of Enoch, and he had *other* sons and daughters. ²⁰ So all the days of Jared were nine hundred and sixty-two years, and he died.

²¹ Enoch lived sixty-five years, and became the father of

Methuselah.²² Then Enoch walked with God three hundred years after he became the father of Methuselah, and he had *other* sons and daughters.²³ So all the days of Enoch were three hundred and sixty-five years.²⁴ Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him.

²⁵ Methuselah lived one hundred and eighty-seven years, and became the father of Lamech.²⁶ Then Methuselah lived seven hundred and eighty-two years after he became the father of Lamech, and he had *other* sons and daughters.²⁷ So all the days of Methuselah were nine hundred and sixty-nine years, and he died.

²⁸ Lamech lived one hundred and eighty-two years, and became the father of a son.²⁹ Now he called his name Noah, saying, "This one will give us rest from our work and from the toil of our hands *arising* from the ground which the Lord has cursed."³⁰ Then Lamech lived five hundred and ninety-five years after he became the father of Noah, and he had *other* sons and daughters.³¹ So all the days of Lamech were seven hundred and seventy-seven years, and he died.

³² Noah was five hundred years old, and Noah became the father of Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

Here Noah lists the nine other antediluvian (or before the flood) patriarchs through whom the seed of woman would come. There are ten of these in all.

| PATRIARCH | MEANING OF NAME | YEAR OF BIRTH | YEAR OF DEATH |
|------------------|------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| Adam | "Man" | 1 | 930 |
| Seth | "Appointed one" | 130 | 1042 |
| Enosh | "Mortal frailty" | 235 | 1140 |
| Cainan | "Smith" | 325 | 1235 |
| Mahalaleel | "God be praised" | 395 | 1290 |
| Zared | "Descent" | 460 | 1422 |
| Enoch | "Dedication" | 622 | 987 |
| Methuselah | "When he dies, judgement" | 687 | 1656 |
| Lamech | "Conqueror" | 874 | 1651 |
| Noah | "Rest" | 1056 | 2006 |

Some interesting information about these men:

1. These are the patriarchs that carried the seed of woman, not the only people that existed.
2. Adam lived until the time of Lamech who was Noah's father. Only one generation separated Noah from Adam. The story and information still fresh.
3. Enoch – Jude 14-15 actually quotes some of the prophecies made by this patriarch who prophesied of not only the judgment against the world that was coming in Noah's time but also of the second coming of Christ. These are the oldest of such prophecies, before the flood.

He "walked with God" in that he was a faithful one during a wicked time (Lamech was 7th generation and so was Enoch). He was taken to heaven without seeing death. Hebrews 11:5 gives more details.

The antediluvian prophet not only warned the present generation of judgment but encouraged those who believed before the flood of two things:

1. The promise would be fulfilled.
2. The nature of the promise was freedom from death since he did not die.

He was a "type" that previewed the eternal nature of the promise before the flood. Elijah was this "type" during the Old Testament (II Kings 2:11) for he did not see death either. Christ is the "anti-type" or fulfillment in the New Testament.

| | | |
|-------------------|-------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Before the flood | After the flood | New Testament |
| Did not see death | Did not see death | Fulfillment |
| ENOCH | ELIJAH | Raised from the dead CHRIST |

3. Examples of God's power over death.
4. Vs. 25-27 – **Methuselah** – His name implies that God will act at the end of his life. He dies in the year of the flood, as his name suggests.
5. Vs. 28-32 – **Lamech and Noah** – Lamech was a prophet because he spoke concerning the future in regards to his son. Of all the children he bore, only Noah survived. Through Noah the promised seed would come. Noah does not only have three sons but again these three are mentioned because only these would come aboard the ark, through these three the world would be repopulated and through one (Shem) the seed of woman would continue.

Now we have established with a broad stroke the millennium between Adam and Noah while tracing the seed of woman through each of the 10 patriarchs from Adam to Noah.

LESSONS

We often read through or skip the genealogy sections thinking of them as boring and irrelevant but there are a couple of important lessons to draw from these.

1. God is patient

In six days, He makes the world and all it contains, but He waits a thousand years to allow man to go to the end of his rope. He waits patiently to see who will respond to Him before judging.

When we are impatient with ourselves because we have not reached a certain point or totally overcome a certain sin in six days or six weeks or even six years, we need to take comfort in the fact that God is patient with us, "not willing that any **should perish** but that all should come to **repentance.**" – II Peter 3:9.

God does not want **any** to be lost. He wants us to **repent**, not to accomplish perfection (which is impossible). There is a difference.

2. God's plan will win

Despite the sinfulness and schemes of Satan and his seed, the seed of woman survived. God's plan is that those who are the seed of woman (Christians) will have the experience of Enoch, Elijah, and Christ, to overcome death.

God accomplished it then and this is an encouragement to us that He can and will accomplish it now.

It was not any easier, in fact more difficult, to believe then than it is now. Those who believed and lived righteously then (the 10 Patriarchs) received the promise. Those who believe and live righteously now (the disciples of Jesus) will also receive the promise.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What is the relationship of God's promise in Genesis 3:15 and the birth of Seth in Genesis 4:25-26?
2. What is meant by the statement in Genesis 4:26, "Then men began to call upon the name of the Lord"?
3. Why would Genesis record in detail the lineage from Adam forward?
4. What is meant by the description of Enoch of, "He walked with God"? What is the implication for us?
5. What is the meaning of "type" as used to describe Enoch and Elijah?
6. What was the major result of Noah's salvation from the flood?
7. How can you use this lesson to grow spiritually and help others come into a relationship with Jesus?

21.

The Times of Noah

GENESIS 6:1-13

In our last lesson we reviewed the millennium between Adam and Noah.

1. There is the end of Adam's record of his own generation in chapter 5:1 and the beginning of Noah's record in 5:2.
2. Noah summarizes Adam's life and death and then links together the ten patriarchs through whom the original promise of God was carried from generation to generation. We reviewed these looking at their ages and lives.
3. The Bible does not focus on social development or history per se, it traces the promise of God to save man, from Adam to Jesus.

Now we go from a "wide shot" of the seed of promise over a span of 1,000 years, to a close-up view of one man through whom that promise was preserved during the worst calamity the earth has or will ever suffer until the end of time.

NOAH

³⁷ For the coming of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah. ³⁸ For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, ³⁹ and they did not understand until the flood came and took them all away; so will the

coming of the Son of Man be.
– Matthew 24:37-39

There are many people who believe that Jesus is God and that His word is contained in the New Testament, however, they doubt the historicity of the global flood, relegating it to mythology.

However, Matthew records that Jesus not only referred to the flood as an accurate historical fact but urged His disciples to study it in order to be prepared for His own return in the future.

I was not there, do not have pictures of the event but I do have one eye-witness, Noah, and his word confirmed by Jesus, the Son of God. This is enough to convince me that when we speak of Noah and the flood we are talking about an accurate account of a historical event.

¹ Now it came about, when men began to multiply on the face of the land, and daughters were born to them, ² that the sons of God saw that the daughters of men were beautiful; and they took wives for themselves, whomever they chose. ³ Then the Lord said, "My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, because he also is flesh; nevertheless his days shall be one hundred and twenty years." ⁴ The Nephilim were on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of men, and they bore *children* to them. Those were the mighty men who *were* of old, men of renown.
– Genesis 6:1-4

This is a controversial passage that can be interpreted in several ways:

1. Angels took women as wives and produced children – seeds of Satan. The term sons of God always referred to angels in the Old Testament and was translated this way in the Septuagint (Greek translation of the Torah), by Josephus and by early Christian writers (Jude 6).

2. The descendants of Seth (who was a righteous man) began to marry the descendants of Cain. These unions between believers and unbelievers produced wicked offspring.
3. Demonic forces possessed the descendants of Cain and they took women and produced equally possessed children who were powerfully wicked.

Whichever interpretation you use you end up with the same result.

- Powerful and wicked beings began to inhabit the earth and raise the level of evil and violence to intolerable levels (*NEPHILIM* = GIANTS).
- These verses are given to explain how these people came to be.
- These people were lionized by the ungodly in songs and fables later on.
- God declares that there will be a judgment on man in 120 years.

⁵ Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. ⁶ The Lord was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart.
- Genesis 6:5-6

Noah summarizes the condition of the world which is complete anarchy. Wickedness was everywhere. People's thinking and plans were always evil.

God does not repent of sin but rather He changes His attitude. His attitude of love and mercy towards a race that may be imperfect but attempting to serve Him changes to one of judgment and righteous indignation when that race devolves into complete wickedness and rebelliousness. God must meet the demands of both His love and His holiness.

Different passages throughout the Bible give us a more detailed view of the condition of the antediluvian world that led to its destruction:

1. Preoccupation with physical appetites (materialism)
– Luke 17:26-27
2. Satanic activity in the physical realm – Genesis 6:2
3. General unbelief – Hebrews 11:7
4. Ungodly behavior – Jude 14-15
5. Widespread violence – Genesis 6:11-13

Without God in his world, man begins a descent into materialism and wickedness that ultimately destroys him. Before this could happen, God would intervene in order to save and preserve the seed of promise.

⁷ The Lord said, "I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, from man to animals to creeping things and to birds of the sky; for I am sorry that I have made them."

This intention is articulated here in verse seven and the extent of God's judgment is expressed: all would perish (except the marine life).

⁸ But Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD.

This is the final verse in Noah's record and account. He only writes of himself that he found God's grace and for this reason was spared the judgment. In other places we learn several things about Noah:

1. In four places (Genesis 6:22; 7:5; 7:9; 7:16) it is said that Noah did everything God had required of him. He was an obedient person.
2. He had only one wife (Genesis 7:13).
3. He was a preacher (II Peter 2:5). No one was converted by his preaching (at least 120 years) except 3 of his sons who came into the ark with him.
4. He was a man of faith who withstood the pressure of society and discouragement of a failed ministry but continued to do God's will (Hebrews 11:7).
5. He was a master builder because he constructed this great structure and it survived the flood.

6. After the flood he was the first to offer sacrifice and begin anew the line of those who called upon God; he also became a farmer (Genesis 9:20).
7. He planted a vineyard and got drunk on the wine (Genesis 9:24).
8. He was considered a righteous man by God, just and perfect, and one who walked with God (Genesis 6:9).

That does not mean he was without error or imperfection. It means that his heart was turned to God and God offered this man His grace, and because of this grace and mercy Noah was considered fully acceptable before God.

This is the first time the idea of grace is mentioned in the Bible and demonstrated in a person. Acceptability through performance: he was not perfect, he did not succeed in his ministry. Acceptability through faith. Faith expressed through perseverance and desire to obey: he withstood the pressure to deny God and responded to Him in obedience.

⁹ These are *the records of the generations* of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his time; Noah walked with God. ¹⁰ Noah became the father of three sons: Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

These begin the account of the sons of Noah and thus start by tying their record to the previous one and introducing themselves.

¹¹ Now the earth was corrupt in the sight of God, and the earth was filled with violence. ¹² God looked on the earth, and behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted their way upon the earth. ¹³ Then God said to Noah, "The end of all flesh has come before Me; for the earth is filled with violence because of them; and behold, I am about to destroy them with the earth.

There is another summary statement about the condition of the world. Previously, Noah preached about the conditions and now his sons are recounting how the situation had not changed despite the preaching.

There is also a mention that the earth would be destroyed along with all men. The point is that some people say that there may have been a local flood in the area that was mythologized into the great worldwide flood but the Bible says the entire earth was covered and this statement is confirmed by New Testament writers as well (II Peter 3:6).

The problem is easily settled with the thought that if God can create the universe, it is a small matter to cover one single planet with water.

SUMMARY

Noah completes his testimony by linking together the ten patriarchs from Adam to himself. He describes the state of the world as it has been dominated by wicked people somehow produced through Satan's influence. He refers to himself only as one who finds grace in God's eyes, nothing about his work or perseverance. He notes that God establishes a specific period of time when He will pass judgment.

His sons pick up the narrative and confirm that the world has ignored the warning and they begin to describe the results of God's judgment.

LESSONS

1. Perseverance, not perfection

God knows we cannot be perfect, without fault, or never sin. He does not ask us to accomplish the impossible. He does look for us to offer what we can do. What is humanly possible despite our weaknesses, and that is to believe and to persevere in that belief.

Noah persevered in his belief and that perseverance was expressed as cooperation with God to do His will. Some are discouraged if they do not have a "perfect score" all the time. It has to be perfect or nothing. God wants us to remain in the game, whether we are ahead on points or

behind. In return for this perseverance, He rewards us by considering us perfect in His eyes, even if we have not achieved this in reality. Jesus accomplished perfection on our behalf. Today, our objective is to be faithful to Christ.

2. We do not have 120 years.

God was extremely kind to these people. He actually told them when the judgment would be: 120 years. Imagine knowing that the judgment would be in exactly 120 years from today. I believe this was a testimony to their wickedness that God had to clearly reveal the oncoming judgment and this to no avail.

We, on the other hand, do not know when the judgment is coming. It could be today or in 120 years or in 120 centuries. The only thing we know for sure is that we do not know when Jesus will judge us. We need to be ready at all times and make sure that each day we are persevering in the faith, not allowing our imperfections or the pressure and disbelief in the world to discourage us.

3. God can punish us now

We often take refuge in the idea that the only punishment God **can** deliver will be the judgment at the end of the world. God is sovereign, and whenever mankind descends into great wickedness, he is still able to punish and discipline in real time.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Read Mathew 24:37-39. Other than the purpose of Jesus making this statement about His return, what else could be significant about this passage?
2. What are some facts about Noah as recorded in Genesis 5?
3. What was the impact of the "Sons of God" marrying the daughters of man?
4. Review the following scriptures, and compare them with Genesis 6:5-6, and discuss the implications of these for us:
 - Luke 17:26-27
 - Genesis 6:2
 - Hebrews 11:7
 - Jude 14-15
 - Genesis 6:11-13
5. Read Genesis 6:22, 7:5, 7:9; 7:16 and use only one word to describe Noah and the implication of these words for us.
6. How can you use this lesson to grow spiritually and help others come into a relationship with Jesus?

22.

The Building of the Ark

GENESIS 6:14-22

We have looked at the generations of Noah's sons and the record written by the survivors of the flood. They confirm that 120 years after God's final warning to man that if he did not repent, He would destroy them. We saw, however, that man continued to be wicked and unrepentant.

In the following section the writers describe the terrible judgment that came upon the world and a close-up view of how their father, Noah, prepared for the catastrophic flood that was to take place.

It is interesting to note that the Bible record has provided us with specific details of the way these people were saved.

THE ARK

¹⁴ Make for yourself an ark of gopher wood; you shall make the ark with rooms, and shall cover it inside and out with pitch. ¹⁵ This is how you shall make it: the length of the ark three hundred cubits, its breadth fifty cubits, and its height thirty cubits. ¹⁶ You shall make a window for the ark, and finish it to a cubit from the top; and set the door of the ark in the side of it; you shall make it with lower, second, and third decks.

- Genesis 6:14-16

These verses not only give us a picture of the physical dimensions of the vessel that Noah was to build but also announces how God is going to carry out His promise to destroy the world. Up until this time, God has not told them how He would punish them.

Some interesting statistics on the ark itself:

1. The term ark simply means a box and it is the same word used for the basket into which Moses was placed when he was a baby. A different word is used for the Ark of the Covenant which meant to gather, a kind of chest, or coffin.
2. Modern measurements (conservative estimations) would put the ark at 438 feet long, 73 feet wide and 44 feet high. That is about 1½ football fields long and four stories high.
3. Impossible to tip over. The ark was not built for speed or direction. Without sails or a rudder it was simply a floating box. However, it was nearly impossible to tip over and sink. A vessel this size and shape could be tilted to any angle short of 90° and would still be able to right itself. This was important, given the nature of the disaster that was to take place.
4. A box this size contained 1,400,000 cubic feet of space. This would be the equivalent of 522 box cars on a train or the capacity to hold 125,000 sheep.
5. Multi-storied. The ark had three stories with each one divided into different rooms or stables for animals.
6. Construction materials. We do not know what gopher wood was but probably some dense kind of wood and "pitch" means to "cover". It is the same word used for "atonement" in other passages. We do not know its exact composition either, only that the wood was covered with a water-resistant material.
7. Windows and door. The term for window in Hebrew is literally "opening for light". This term suggests several openings around

the ark to let in light and air. There was, however, only one door by which the people and animals would enter and leave.

This construction must have seemed strange to the people of this era because they had never seen rain or a flood and this tremendous construction was being built where there was no water. Once complete it must have seemed ridiculous:

- no way to get it to water,
- too big to be useful,
- no sails or rudder to steer it,
- built to protect against a flood.

To the unbelievers the ark was a useless, irrelevant box in the middle of nowhere. To those who believed, it was the way of salvation.

GOD'S JUDGMENT AND PROMISE TO NOAH – VS. 17-22

Now we see God describing what judgment He will be bringing on the world for its sinfulness.

¹⁷ Behold, I, even I am bringing the flood of water upon the earth, to destroy all flesh in which is the breath of life, from under heaven; everything that is on the earth shall perish.

The judgment and who it affects are very specific.

1. God is the one bringing judgment, not an act of nature attributed to God, but God Himself purposefully acting against man through natural forces.
2. Flood of waters is the Hebrew words "*MABBUL MAYIM*." The word for flood "*MABBUL*" is only used to describe **this** catastrophe. Other floods or water disturbances are described using other words. This word literally means destruction and is not used anywhere else other than Psalm 29:10 where it is

describing this same thing in a poetic way. Even in the New Testament, when the flood is mentioned, the Greek word used is "*KATACLUSMOS*" which means cataclysm, denoting the immensity of the flood. I say all this because many people today claim that the flood was just a regional flood that ancient writers embellished and parlayed into a worldwide flood for the sake of the story. But the language used in both the Old and New Testaments is quite specific in describing a once-in-history event.

3. The flood or destruction will destroy all that has the breath of life. This includes mankind and animal life, but not marine life. Again, the Bible establishes the fact of complete worldwide destruction and not just a localized flood. If it is not a worldwide flood, we have trouble explaining so much evidence pointing to the fact that one did occur.

¹⁸ But I will establish My covenant with you; and you shall enter the ark—you and your sons and your wife, and your sons' wives with you.

We see the promise that God makes to Noah. It is the first time the word covenant appears in the Bible. The idea of covenant is different than the idea of agreement or contract.

In an agreement or contract:

- Both parties contribute to the details and conditions of the contract.
- Either party can, under certain conditions, opt out of the contract.
- It takes the agreement of both to put the contract into effect.
- Benefits both parties equally
- Used to guarantee fairness and honesty.
- Can be annulled.

In a covenant with God:

- God establishes all the conditions in the covenant.
- God never opts out of the covenant. He honors it no matter what man does.
- The covenant exists and is in force based on God's word. God cannot lie.
- The purpose of the covenant is to benefit man.

And so, God makes a covenant with Noah, it will be elaborated when the flood is over and God will describe it in detail then but for now God invites Noah to enter into the covenant with Him by building the ark and entering into it when the time comes.

¹⁹ And of every living thing of all flesh, you shall bring two of every kind into the ark, to keep them alive with you; they shall be male and female. ²⁰ Of the birds after their kind, and of the animals after their kind, of every creeping thing of the ground after its kind, two of every kind will come to you to keep them alive. ²¹ As for you, take for yourself some of all food which is edible, and gather it to yourself; and it shall be for food for you and for them."

In the warning, God also provides information concerning the use of the ark and how the animals were to come to him. Two of every species or kind in Biblical terms probably covers a wider range than division types used today.

There are many who are skeptical about this but it is all quite possible:

- Most animals are small.
- Scientists estimate that there are approximately 18,000 species of mammals, birds, reptiles and amphibians in the world today.
- Double this amount to account for extinct species and there are approximately 40,000 species.
- Two of each brings you to 80,000 creatures.

- The ark could easily accommodate this number.
- Insects (1M of them in types) do not take much room and no need to make special provision for marine life.
- The important factor is that God is the One who brought the animal life to Noah (he did not have to capture them – we learn that later on).
- These animals were under God's care and control and so their needs, and temperament for such an experience could easily be controlled by God. The One who created them could sustain them while in the ark. For example, He took care of the Israelites in the desert for 40 years and their clothes or shoes did not wear out!
- Noah also loaded provisions.

²² Thus Noah did; according to all that God had commanded him, so he did.

The record shows that Noah chose to enter into the covenant with God and did so by obeying God's command by building the ark and preparing it for its yearlong voyage.

LESSONS

The story of the ark is full of types and lessons for us today.

1. The ark is a "type" for the church

The first type is that of the church. There are many similarities.

- There is only one ark/one church.
- There is safety only in the ark/only in the church.
- There is only one way into the ark, and only one way into the church: Christ.
- Those in the ark are alive through the water. Those in the church are alive through the water of baptism.

- The ark carries them to the next life, the re-created earth. The church carries us to the new heavens and new earth.
- Only believers are in the ark. Only believers are in the church.
- The ark was laughed at and seemed irrelevant before the flood. The church seems irrelevant before the judgment.
- The ark was built by those who believed and obeyed God's promises. The church is built by those who believe and obey God's promises.
- God provided for those in the ark, to build it and to live in it. God provides for the establishing of His Church and the preservation of it through the catastrophes of this life.
- The ark was absolutely necessary because the flood did come. The church is absolutely necessary because the judgment will surely come with Jesus' return.

2. You need to be in the ark and stay in it.

The story impresses upon us the importance of the church and the fact that it is the vessel through which we will be saved when the next catastrophe occurs.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Summarize Genesis 6:14-16 and answer the following questions:
 - Why did God provide the details for building the Ark?
 - What was Noah's reaction and the final result?
 - What is the implication of this passage for us?
2. Genesis 6:9 states that Noah walked with God. This is the same language in Genesis 5:27 that describes Enoch. Why was Noah not taken as Enoch was?
3. What are some lessons we can learn from Genesis 6:17-22.
4. How is the Ark a type for the Church today?
5. How can you use this lesson to grow spiritually and help others come into a relationship with Jesus?

23.

Flood Details

GENESIS 7:1-24

In the last chapter we reviewed some of the features of the ark itself (how it was built) and more importantly, how the ark was a model or type for the church. We made comparisons between the ark and the church:

- Men could only be saved in the ark and we can only be saved in the church.
- There was only one ark and there is only one church.
- There was only one door into the ark and there is only one door into the church.

I have another comparison not mentioned yet. Everyone was invited to come into the ark but only a few came in. It is the same with the church.

We also examined the idea of covenants. These were promises God made to man about what He was going to do. God made a covenant with Noah concerning the ark. The promise was that those who entered it would be saved from the disaster about to happen.

Let us now look at the flood and its consequences.

GOD BREAKS HIS SILENCE – 7:1-10

In chapter seven we see the final preparations being made for entering the ark before the flood comes.

¹ Then the Lord said to Noah, "Enter the ark, you and all your household, for you *alone* I have seen *to be* righteous before Me in this time.

There has been silence for 120 years since God warned Noah about the judgment to come. Since that time Noah has obeyed God's command without wavering and has continued to preach to his generation.

Now, the silence is broken as the time for judgment is at hand. The animals are assembled, the last of the patriarchs have died, and the ark is ready.

Note that God brings the animals to the ark (no free will) but invites Noah into the ark (free will) with Him. God will be with him in the ark to sustain and protect. This is another similarity between the ark and the church.

The words of God to Noah ("I have found thee righteous") also sound the same as Jesus' words ("good and faithful servant") when He talks about God's welcome to those who have been faithful in a faithless generation.

² You shall take with you of every clean animal by sevens, a male and his female; and of the animals that are not clean two, a male and his female; ³ also of the birds of the sky, by sevens, male and female, to keep offspring alive on the face of all the earth.

Here God gives instructions concerning the division and use of the animals Noah is to take aboard the ark.

- Noah was to make a distinction between clean and unclean, probably animals suitable for domestication from the wild.

- Domesticated animals were to outnumber wild to provide for food, etc.
- Also, the seventh pair of clean were to be used for sacrificial purposes.
- The overall purpose was to keep the animal kingdom alive.

Later, during Moses' time, God will make further distinctions between clean and unclean.

⁴ For after seven more days, I will send rain on the earth forty days and forty nights; and I will blot out from the face of the land every living thing that I have made." ⁵ Noah did according to all that the Lord had commanded him.

A final warning about the specifics of what will take place. Note that God provides a final week for last minute preparations and a final call to repentance for those who are still unbelieving. They might have scoffed at the beginning of the building but now that the animals are boarding, the ark is complete and Noah is making a final appeal, the signs were clearly evident that something was going to happen and yet, no one responded.

The Hebrew words "*KOL YEYUM*" (every living thing) can also be translated "all existence". This is significant because it refers not only to breathing animals but to everything that has sentient life... birds, insects, animals, plants, trees, etc. Everything would be destroyed and buried in sediment where thousands of years later scientists would formulate all kinds of fantastic theories about billions of years and evolution. The Bible says that Noah did not hesitate in the face of this but continued to trust God and obey Him.

Another parallel with the church is that Jesus promises that the world will be destroyed completely and the only way to be saved is to be in the church. The only way to enter, however, is not through a physical door but through the spiritual door of faith expressed in repentance and baptism (Acts 2:38).

⁶ Now Noah was six hundred years old when the flood of water came upon the earth. ⁷ Then Noah and his sons and his wife and his sons' wives with him entered the ark because of the water of the flood. ⁸ Of clean animals and animals that are not clean and birds and everything that creeps on the ground, ⁹ there went into the ark to Noah by twos, male and female, as God had commanded Noah.

This is a summary comment of all that had taken place according to God's plan. Noah's age is given as a historical marker. The order of entry: Noah first, his sons next as heads of family, wife of Noah and the sons' wives. Then the clean and unclean animals followed by the creeping things.

This is the end of the antediluvian age because once they are in the ark the judgment comes upon the earth. When Jesus comes, the dead in Christ and the faithful are caught up with Him in the air, then the wicked and world are destroyed.

This marks the end of the preparations for the flood, the 120 years of grace period, which corresponds to the 1000 years in Revelation which refers to the time the church is preaching and reaching the lost. When this time is over, judgment comes.

THE FLOOD – 7:10-24

¹⁰ It came about after the seven days, that the water of the flood came upon the earth. ^{11a} In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, on the seventeenth day of the month,

We do not know the dating or calendar system used then, only that there one existed and the exact time when the flood came was recorded.

^{11b} on the same day all the fountains of the great deep burst open, and the floodgates of the sky were opened. ¹² The rain fell upon the earth for forty days and forty nights.

It is amazing how God can reduce an infinitely complicated thing to an understandable bite, without losing the essential meaning. In one and a half verses God explains the incredible natural phenomena that produced the flood.

FOUNTAINS OF THE GREAT DEEP

In the beginning I explained that the earth was irrigated by underground waterways that provided moisture (Genesis 1:10; Genesis 2:5). These tremendous reservoirs burst through the earth's crust to cover the earth.

WINDOWS OF HEAVEN

I also explained that the "waters above the heavens" mentioned in Genesis 1:7 formed a water vapor canopy around the earth which provided an even temperature, moisture and protection from harmful rays. This water canopy is now dissolved and poured out on the earth as a torrent of rain for 40 days and nights.

Scientists tell us that if all the water in the clouds presently over the earth were to suddenly dissolve into rain, the earth would be covered with 1½ foot of water, not enough to cause a worldwide catastrophe.

But if all the water of the world in the earth and a water canopy in the sky were to simultaneously dissolve and cover the earth, this could (and did) cause the flood that destroyed all.

WHAT CAUSED THE FLOOD?

Some say meteor crash; some say the earth tilted on its axis, others say aliens.

The Bible only describes the natural functions which were released that created the flood but does not describe the natural "trigger" that set these in motion.

- Theologically it was sin.

- Realistically it was God's will.
- Naturally, we do not know what God did or allowed to happen to cause this result.

¹³ On the very same day Noah and Shem and Ham and Japheth, the sons of Noah, and Noah's wife and the three wives of his sons with them, entered the ark, ¹⁴ they and every beast after its kind, and all the cattle after their kind, and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth after its kind, and every bird after its kind, all sorts of birds. ¹⁵ So they went into the ark to Noah, by twos of all flesh in which was the breath of life. ¹⁶ Those that entered, male and female of all flesh, entered as God had commanded him; and the Lord closed *it* behind him.

This is a final "snapshot" and confirmation of those who went in and the time, not before or after but exactly when they were supposed to enter. Note that God is the one who shuts them in. He is the one who seals them safely inside the boat.

Another similarity with the church is that God is the one who:

- Cleanses our sins – Acts 2:38
- Adds us to the church – Acts 2:47
- Seals us with the Holy Spirit – Ephesians 1:13

Verses 17 to 24 describe the flood as being a worldwide catastrophic event. In the last century science has been in love with the theory of evolution and its position that the earth evolved over billions of years. This leaves no room for the sudden disaster of a worldwide flood. The flood of the Bible has been explained as a myth or a local flood mythologized into a worldwide event by Bible writers. However, the Bible says it was a worldwide event in its description.

¹⁷ Then the flood came upon the earth for forty days, and the water increased and lifted up the ark, so that it rose above the

earth.¹⁸ The water prevailed and increased greatly upon the earth, and the ark floated on the surface of the water.

It would require at least twenty feet of water to lift up a boat the size of the ark. That is not some local river overflow. The terms "above the earth" and "upon the earth" refer to the scope of the water. A local flood would be receding after 40 days, not just starting as stated here.

¹⁹ The water prevailed more and more upon the earth, so that all the high mountains everywhere under the heavens were covered. ²⁰ The water prevailed fifteen cubits higher, and the mountains were covered.

All the hills and mountains that were there were covered. They were at least twenty feet above the highest peak (Mt. Ararat, 17,000 ft.) These people were eye witnesses and were recording their experience in detail. Wouldn't you?

²¹ All flesh that moved on the earth perished, birds and cattle and beasts and every swarming thing that swarms upon the earth, and all mankind; ²² of all that was on the dry land, all in whose nostrils was the breath of the spirit of life, died. ²³ Thus He blotted out every living thing that was upon the face of the land, from man to animals to creeping things and to birds of the sky, and they were blotted out from the earth; and only Noah was left, together with those that were with him in the ark.

The Bible is very specific, everything was destroyed: vegetation, insects, birds, animals, and all of mankind. A local flood would not do this kind of damage. Only Noah and those with him survived. This also tells us that the ride in the ark did not cause the death of anyone inside.

²⁴ The water prevailed upon the earth one hundred and fifty days.

This does not mean that after 150 days there was no more water (it would be a year before enough land would be exposed to allow Noah to leave the ark). There was **only** water that covered everything for 150 days (5 months). Can you imagine the damage caused by such a condition? No wonder everything died. Hurricane Katrina was a small disaster in comparison.

In addition to the catastrophe, the rapid destruction and sedimentation of bones and vegetation are what created the geological records which are found today but misinterpreted by evolutionary scientists.

LESSONS

For now, we have learned not only the details of the flood and the range of its destruction, but also the important fact that the biblical flood was a worldwide flood, not a local one.

1. God keeps His promises

God said that He would do it and He did. Whether it is good or bad, we need to be careful as well as optimistic when we consider God's promises to bless or punish us.

2. God requires exact obedience

We have the misconception that obedience in the Old Testament was very important but in the New Testament God is more laid back about obedience. Paul says in I Corinthians 10:11 that what was written in the Old Testament was for **our** instruction so we could take note and learn. The command to repent and be baptized or to live holy lives, etc. are to be exactly obeyed today as His commands were then.

3. God is with us

For those on the ark and those in the church, God is present during the journey. Jesus was called *Emmanuel* which means *God with us*. He will be on board until the end. We, therefore, must never be afraid of whatever flood comes into our lives.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why did God wait 120 years between the pronouncement of His judgment and instructions to Noah, and the actual event of the flood, and what are the implications for us?
2. Why did God make the distinctions between clean and unclean animals to enter the Ark?
3. Summarize Genesis 7:10-24 and state the significance of how God brings about the flood.
4. What were the root causes of the flood?
5. Compare the 40 days of the flood to the 40 years of wandering by Israel (Numbers 13:30-37; 32:13).
6. How can you use this lesson to grow spiritually and help others come into a relationship with Jesus?

24.

Effects of the Great Flood

GENESIS 8:1-9:6

We have been studying the passages dealing with the great flood, the ark and Noah. We have commented on the similarity that this event has with the end of the world and the church.

- The ark is like the church in many ways.
- The flood is like the final judgment.

Of course, there are some differences:

- They did not enter the ark until the last day before the flood; we are free to enter the church at any time.
- The flood destroyed the world and a few were saved to begin again in this world; at the return of Jesus intense heat will destroy the world and all of creation and we will inhabit a new heaven and earth suitable for the spiritual bodies that we will have.

In our last chapter we reviewed the flood itself:

- The water for it came from the disruption of underground rivers and the envelope of water vapor that surrounded the earth.
- The destruction was worldwide and explains much of the environmental phenomena we experience today.

At this point we will look at the results of the flood as the waters receded and the people on the ark began to realize the effects of the flood on the earth.

RESULTS OF THE FLOOD – 8:1-14

¹ But God remembered Noah and all the beasts and all the cattle that were with him in the ark; and God caused a wind to pass over the earth, and the water subsided. ² Also the fountains of the deep and the floodgates of the sky were closed, and the rain from the sky was restrained;

It is not that God had forgotten them but that He was about to act on their behalf once again. God stopped the flood by doing three things:

1. Caused a great wind to provide evaporation and drying.
2. Stopped the fountains from gushing forth.
3. Closed the windows of heaven.

³ and the water receded steadily from the earth, and at the end of one hundred and fifty days the water decreased.

The waters receded in such a way that new land formations were created. Some speculate:

- The underground caverns produced by the release of water pressure created new basins for lakes, rivers and seas.
- The lessening of water pressure from below and increased weight from above caused land shifting and new land formations (mountains, continents).

⁴ In the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month, the ark rested upon the mountains of Ararat.

The ark, having no rudder, came to rest in a specific area in the mountains of Ararat, probably the highest point, and again the specific date is given.

⁵ The water decreased steadily until the tenth month; in the tenth month, on the first day of the month, the tops of the mountains became visible.

⁶ Then it came about at the end of forty days, that Noah opened the window of the ark which he had made; ⁷ and he sent out a raven, and it flew here and there until the water was dried up from the earth. ⁸ Then he sent out a dove from him, to see if the water was abated from the face of the land; ⁹ but the dove found no resting place for the sole of her foot, so she returned to him into the ark, for the water was on the surface of all the earth. Then he put out his hand and took her, and brought her into the ark to himself. ¹⁰ So he waited yet another seven days; and again he sent out the dove from the ark. ¹¹ The dove came to him toward evening, and behold, in her beak was a freshly picked olive leaf. So Noah knew that the water was abated from the earth. ¹² Then he waited yet another seven days, and sent out the dove; but she did not return to him again.

In this section the rain and flooding have stopped and they are waiting for the earth to be habitable once again. They were in the ark a total of 371 days. It took roughly 7 months for the earth to dry out and Noah sent birds out to test for dry land.

1. A dove was sent and returned.
2. A raven (scavenger bird) did not.
3. The dove sent out a second time returned this time with an olive branch or seedling to denote that greenery was sprouting again.

¹³ Now it came about in the six hundred and first year, in the first *month*, on the first of the month, the water was dried up from the earth. Then Noah removed the covering of the ark, and looked, and behold, the surface of the ground was dried

up.¹⁴ In the second month, on the twenty-seventh day of the month, the earth was dry.

In the final days that Noah was in the ark he was being very cautious about disembarking and made absolutely sure that the earth was dry and habitable once again.

Dr. Henry Morris, who is a professor of civil engineering and has done research in the area of scientific creationism lists several physical changes that would have been the result of a world-wide flood:

1. The oceans would be more extensive since they now contain the residue of water from below and above the earth.
2. Much less land is habitable and productive having either been destroyed or covered with water.
3. The thermal vapor blanket was dissolved causing the earth to be subject to extreme temperatures thus creating the tropical and arctic climates as well as greater violent weather.
4. Mountain ranges produced, making much of the land uninhabitable.
5. The earth's crust would now have greater movement because of the emptying of the subterranean water reservoirs.
6. The fossil records are produced as all forms of life are buried in the sediment of the flood. These are scattered everywhere and are misread as evolutionary models instead of records of the death caused by the flood.

GOD AND NOAH AFTER THE FLOOD – 8:15-22

¹⁵ Then God spoke to Noah, saying, ¹⁶ "Go out of the ark, you and your wife and your sons and your sons' wives with you.

¹⁷ Bring out with you every living thing of all flesh that is with you, birds and animals and every creeping thing that creeps

on the earth, that they may breed abundantly on the earth, and be fruitful and multiply on the earth." ¹⁸ So Noah went out, and his sons and his wife and his sons' wives with him. ¹⁹ Every beast, every creeping thing, and every bird, everything that moves on the earth, went out by their families from the ark.

Just as God had invited Noah into the ark, now He commands him and his family to leave the ark and go forth to populate and subdue the land once again.

There is a parallel here with the church. Jesus invites us into the church and once we enter in, He sends us forth to go and make disciples of all nations (multiply). The Bible confirms that all humans and animals find their original ancestors from these people on the ark and these animals.

Andrew Woods in his book "*The Center of the Earth*" shows that the earth's land area center is just a short distance from Mount Ararat.

Animals began to multiply, diversify within their types and find places where the climate, food and geography suited their particular needs. As the weather changed from greenhouse to tropical to arctic, some animals adapted and some died.

For example, the dinosaur, the pteronodous, creodous and other strange pre-diluvian beasts did not adapt and became extinct. Scientists like to say, but cannot prove, the idea of evolution over a period of millions of years. However, these creatures could have just as easily become extinct over a period of a few centuries given the right conditions.

²⁰ Then Noah built an altar to the Lord, and took of every clean animal and of every clean bird and offered burnt offerings on the altar.

This is the first mention of "altar" in the Bible. Noah offers sacrifices of thanks. Note that he gives one seventh of his wealth. The clean animals were for food and clothing and important for survival and Noah had seven pairs to begin to replenish the supply but he offers approximately 15%.

²¹ The Lord smelled the soothing aroma; and the Lord said to Himself, "I will never again curse the ground on account of man, for the intent of man's heart is evil from his youth; and I will never again destroy every living thing, as I have done.

²² "While the earth remains,
Seedtime and harvest,
And cold and heat,
And summer and winter,
And day and night
Shall not cease."

God responds to Noah's prayer by promising two things:

1. He would not again "curse" or condemn the earth as He had done with the flood.

He establishes that man's nature is now sinful. This is not to justify it but to reassure Noah that He permits man to live even though he is sinful. Noah knows that God destroyed man because of sin and needs reassurance that as sin appears in man (including himself), God will not destroy the world again.

2. The new environment will be able to sustain man.

Noah knew the old world and its environment but now faces devastation and an uncertain future. God promises him that there will be a cycle of harvesting and that the new environment will be cyclical so as not to despair when the violent weather comes. This is also a promise for future generations that the environment and the earth will always be capable of sustaining mankind.

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF HUMAN GOVERNMENT – 9:1-17

Chapter 9 begins the description of the covenant that God makes with Noah and includes instructions for human social government that until this time had not existed. And God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them,

¹ "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth. ² The fear of you and the terror of you will be on every beast of the earth and on every bird of the sky; with everything that creeps on the ground, and all the fish of the sea, into your hand they are given.

God once again gives man a charge to multiply and replenish the earth. This time he does not have "dominion" over the earth as he once did because the perfect harmony between man and the environment has now been destroyed by the flood. Instead, God puts the "fear" of man into the animals so that they will not totally overrun and destroy mankind. Man is also given the right to **use** the environment for his purposes (in good stewardship).

³ Every moving thing that is alive shall be food for you; I give all to you, as *I gave* the green plant. ⁴ Only you shall not eat flesh with its life, *that is*, its blood.

God also authorizes for the first time the eating of meat. This may have been done before but not with God's permission. Perhaps the weather required more protein. Perhaps as a way of population control.

God does not permit the eating of blood:

- Physically dangerous.
- Theologically the blood represents life and life is what is offered to God in sacrifice. It was to be offered to God, not used for food.
- Avoid pagan practice of drinking the blood to gain the powers and character of the victim, animal or human.

⁵ Surely I will require your lifeblood; from every beast I will require it. And from *every* man, from every man's brother I will require the life of man.

⁶ "Whoever sheds man's blood,
By man his blood shall be shed,

For in the image of God
He made man.

God establishes the concept that **life** as represented by the blood of animals and man belongs to God and He will judge those who spill blood or who murder.

Even animals are under God's judgment if they kill a person (Mosaic Law specified that the animal be killed). And humans who kill other humans must pay with their lives.

In verse 6 God is quite specific in two ways:

1. The price for murder will be the forfeiture of one's own life.
2. The responsibility to carry out this justice is now given to man.

Until this time there was no government, no police, and each man rendered justice in his own way according to conscience and ability.

As men became more sinful this entire society fell into evil violence. God now sets the large perimeter around social justice. There will be required a life for a life and God now authorizes man to execute justice without fear of revenge. If God authorizes execution there is no revenge on the properly appointed executioner thus ending the cycle of revenge.

If man has the right to execute capital punishment, he also has the right and responsibility to develop laws that will help prevent and discourage the type of things that lead to the ultimate crime (robbery, rape, etc.)

Some final thoughts about capital punishment and the Bible.

1. Both the Old and the New Testament support the idea that the government has a right to execute murderers (Genesis 9:5-6; Romans 13:1-4).
 - However, God will judge those who miscarry justice (Exodus 23:7).

2. Both the Old and the New Testament support the idea that God loves and encourages mercy towards murderers, for example King David and the apostle Paul.

A balanced, Biblical view of this question may be the following: The government retains the right, given to it by God, to either exercise the death penalty or show mercy depending on the crime, repentance and circumstance of each case. One reason that this debate is hard to solve is that the Bible authorizes and promotes both. Those responsible for these decisions should always pray for God's wisdom.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Summarize key points from Genesis 8:1-14.
2. What are some major effects of the flood on the earth that we can still see today?
3. Summarize the continued faithfulness of God to Noah as seen in Genesis 8:15-22 and discuss the implications for us.
4. How can you use this lesson to grow spiritually and help others come into a relationship with Jesus?

25.

The Rainbow Covenant

GENESIS 9:7-29

In our last chapter we dealt with the worldwide effects of the flood and the new environment in which Noah and his family found themselves.

1. The physical world had changed dramatically. There were extreme temperatures creating change in climate, which we are still experiencing. The earth's surface was now mostly covered with water and the earth was more mountainous. The natural protective layer of water vapor was now gone subjecting earth to genetic changes, mutations and diseases.

2. The social world now changed as well. One family was left to repopulate. God authorized human government. Diets would now include meat which will require various types of work and trades.

3. The spiritual world changed. Before, God walked with man and the creation was a constant and unbroken reminder of God's love and pleasure with man. Now the environment is hostile and a constant threat and reminder of man's fallen state and ultimate death.

As for you, be fruitful and multiply;
Populate the earth abundantly and multiply in it.
- Genesis 9:7

Even so God, for the second time, gives the command to multiply and repopulate the earth. Despite the reality of man's sinful condition and the fallen state of the world God still loves and plans to save man and reassures him of this fact in two ways:

1. He gives His word that this new environment, despite its hostility, will be able to sustain man and will continue to do so.

While the earth remains,
Seedtime and harvest,
And cold and heat,
And summer and winter,
And day and night
Shall not cease.
- Genesis 8:22

2. He also provides a physical token as a visible reminder that He will not allow the environment to overwhelm them again. This is the subject of this lesson: the rainbow covenant.

THE RAINBOW COVENANT

⁸ Then God spoke to Noah and to his sons with him, saying, ⁹ "Now behold, I Myself do establish My covenant with you, and with your descendants after you; ¹⁰ and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the cattle, and every beast of the earth with you; of all that comes out of the ark, even every beast of the earth.

Note the subjects of God's covenant. Remember, a covenant is a promise of God where He sets the conditions and guarantees the results. We can abide by the conditions and receive the rewards, or not.

He mentions Noah and all of his descendants. This includes us since we are all descendants of Noah. He is also careful to include all of the animals with Noah as well. Animals have no soul in the image of God but they are His creatures and God includes them in His care.

¹¹ I establish My covenant with you; and all flesh shall never again be cut off by the water of the flood, neither shall there again be a flood to destroy the earth." ¹² God said, "This is the sign of the covenant which I am making between Me and you

and every living creature that is with you, for all successive generations; ¹³ I set My bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a sign of a covenant between Me and the earth. ¹⁴ It shall come about, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow will be seen in the cloud, ¹⁵ and I will remember My covenant, which is between Me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and never again shall the water become a flood to destroy all flesh. ¹⁶ When the bow is in the cloud, then I will look upon it, to remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth." ¹⁷ And God said to Noah, "This is the sign of the covenant which I have established between Me and all flesh that is on the earth."

The promise is that the earth and life upon it will never again be destroyed by a great flood. The physical reminder of this will be the rainbow. Even though the environment will be harsh, there may be hurricanes and floods, etc. that would seem like a repeat of the worldwide destruction, however, the rainbow will appear as a reminder of the promise.

Some say the rainbow was always there and God merely invested it with meaning but in the pre-flood world there were no rainstorms and thus no rainbows so this is the first instance and the original significance God gave to it. Although the world does not acknowledge it, whenever we see a rainbow it remains a direct sign of God's promise to maintain the environment and to sustain life until Jesus comes.

SONS OF NOAH

In the world there are various ways of classifying the races - three to six or more depending on your system:

- Caucasian (white)
- Negroid (black)
- Oriental (Asian)
- Some add mixtures of these.

There are about 150 nations of significance with over 3000 main languages. The source of all of these has been a problem for evolutionary scientists. There are some reports today that indicate that man originated in the North African region or Middle Eastern region. Many do not like the implications of these findings because they seem to confirm the Biblical record of the origin of the different races. The Bible does provide the information on the beginning and dispersion of the early groups that ultimately developed into the different races that we now have today.

¹⁸ Now the sons of Noah who came out of the ark were Shem and Ham and Japheth; and Ham was the father of Canaan. ¹⁹ These three *were* the sons of Noah, and from these the whole earth was populated.

The sons are once again introduced and they are brought forward as the originators of what is now the human race. Dr. Morris writes of these first families:

“ All the physical characteristics of the different tribes and nations must, therefore, have been present in the genetic constitutions of these six people... Somehow by the regular mechanisms of genetics, variation, recombination, all the various tribes and nations must have developed. (p. 232, The Genesis Record)

We are given a look at the character of these men through an incident that happened during a moment of weakness in Noah's life.

²⁰ Then Noah began farming and planted a vineyard. ²¹ He drank of the wine and became drunk, and uncovered himself inside his tent. ²² Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brothers outside. ²³ But Shem and Japheth took a garment and laid it upon both their shoulders and walked backward and covered the nakedness of their father; and their faces were turned away, so that they did not see their father's nakedness.

Noah planted a vineyard, drank the wine and got drunk. This is the first time wine is mentioned and is mentioned in a negative way. He was a great man, strong against worldly temptation but in a weak moment fell and shamed himself because of it. He lay drunk in his tent and naked in his drunken stupor (probably because it was warm).

Then we see the reactions (and some of the character) of his sons.

HAM

He enters the tent and "gazed" at his father. Some say that there was a sexual connotation here but the fact that the next verse says he told his brothers about it suggests another situation. The term gaze "to look at with satisfaction" and the term to "tell" refer to a telling with delight reveals a man who was happy to see his father's weakness and reveal it to others. Some believe that Ham, although a believer, was rebellious and constrained under his father's rule, and in seeing him in weakness, he rejoiced and tried to sway his brothers into mockery and rebellion as well. This trait seemed to crop out in his descendants, the Canaanites, who were sexually promiscuous as well.

SHEM AND JAPHETH

They did not go along with his delight but rather tried to cover their father's shame and not see him in order to share in that shame. The essential difference between them is that Ham obeyed out of constraint and fear and when the figure of authority fell, his respect and self-control fell with it. The other brothers obeyed from faith and principle and so when the one who embodied those principles fell, their faith and commitment did not fall with him. They continued to uphold the principles.

There is an amazing similarity between Noah and Adam in their respective experiences:

ADAM

1. Commanded to fill the earth and control it.
2. Ancestor of all men before the flood.
3. Sinned by partaking of a forbidden fruit.
4. Result of sin was nakedness revealed.
5. Covered by God with animal skins
6. The result ended in a prophecy that affected future generations.
7. Along with curse was the promise of a blessing.

NOAH

1. Commanded to replenish the earth and govern it.
2. Ancestor of all men after the flood.
3. Sinned by partaking of a fruit in a forbidden way.
4. Result of sin was nakedness revealed.
5. Covered by his sons with own cloak.
6. The result was a prophecy that affected them and future generations.
7. Along with curse was a renewed promise of a blessing.

²⁴ When Noah awoke from his wine, he knew what his youngest son had done to him. ²⁵ So he said,

"Cursed be Canaan;

A servant of servants

He shall be to his brothers."

²⁶ He also said, "Blessed be the Lord,

The God of Shem;

And let Canaan be his servant.

²⁷ "May God enlarge Japheth,

And let him dwell in the tents of Shem;

And let Canaan be his servant."

These verses contain the prophecy concerning the track that the descendants of these three men will take.

He awakens from his drunken stupor and in some way (through his wife or sons) finds out what has taken place. Now that the hearts and true character of his sons are revealed to him Noah makes a prophesy concerning each one.

1. Ham

He refers to Ham through his descendant Canaan (the writer is making sure that the connection between the two is clear). The specific curse is that the descendants of Ham will be in a position of service to the descendants of the other two. This does not describe or support the idea of slavery or conquest however. History also shows that the Sumerians, Egyptians, Ethiopians and some Oriental peoples have not been historically enslaved to the others.

However, history shows that their concerns as a people have been in the area of serving the "cursed earth" in their pursuit of development (whereas the Shemites have a more theological bent and the Japhites have had a knack for philosophy and commerce).

Several centuries ago, many trying to justify slavery of the black man interpreted this verse to say that God had cursed the black man to slavery and a white man was justified in owning slaves because this was their position.

First of all, not all descendants of Ham were black. Secondly it was service that the Hamites provided, not slavery. Slavery is immoral. It is highly unlikely that Noah, under the Spirit's guidance, would curse an entire race of people to perpetual slavery. Historically the Hamitic people have provided the world with basic concepts, inventions, tools that served the purposes of others but have never taken full advantage of their own innovations. For example they were:

1. Original explorers and settlers of almost all parts of the world after Babel.
2. First cultivators of vegetables and livestock.
3. First to develop basic structural forms and tools.
4. First to develop weaving, fabric devices.
5. Discovered the use of medicines and surgery.
6. Invented basic math, navigation, surveying.
7. Banking, postal system, commerce, trade first developed by these people.
8. Paper, ink, printing, communication first developed by these people.

They provided much of the essential building blocks for social development but did not gain advantage or prosperity because of their overall contribution. In this way they were the servant of servants, they served the interest of the other two. The Hamites served the material interests of the other two brothers and their descendants.

2. Shem

Little is said but the little speaks volumes. The Shemites are the ones who became the Semites or Semitic people and from Shem's descendants came Abraham from whom came the Jewish people and the Lord Jesus Christ. There is a glimmer of this promise here because only for Shem does Noah mention a relationship and knowledge of God. So we know of Shem that he was spiritual in nature. The term "Jehovah" is used here for Lord implying that Shem knew the true God intimately and not just through his father.

Also mentioned is that Ham would serve his interests in the future.

3. Japheth

Noah says three things about him:

- He would be enlarged. This term does not mean geographically but philosophically. Open-minded, curious, wide interests.
- "Dwell in the tents" means to have fellowship with. These two would share their lives, talents and advantages with one another.
- Also, Ham would serve the interests of Japheth as I have explained.

These three men do not represent individual races (black, white, oriental), they represent streams of nations that have a variety of races mixed within each one. They do represent in a general way, however, how each stream has developed:

- The Semites have dominated religious motivations centered in monotheism (Jews, Moslems, Zoroastrianism).
- The Japhethites (Greeks, Romans, Europeans, Americans) have exulted and stressed science and philosophy in their development.
- The Hamites (Egyptians, Phoenicians, Orientals, Africans) have pioneered settlement, cultivation, technology.

There are exceptions, crossovers, but the general trend historically has followed the model originally set out by Noah in this prophecy.

²⁸ Noah lived three hundred and fifty years after the flood. ²⁹ So all the days of Noah were nine hundred and fifty years, and he died.

Noah was the last patriarch to be unaffected by the new environment living longer than anyone other than Jared and Methuselah. This then is the end of the life of the man who lived in both worlds before and after the flood. Next, the table of nations and the tower of Babel.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Summarize Genesis 9:7-17 and discuss its significance.
2. Discuss the events of Genesis 9:20-23 and show the similarities between this event and the immediate consequences of Adam and Eve's original sin.
3. Explain the characteristics and contributions of each of Noah's sons and their significance.
4. How can you use this lesson to grow spiritually and help others come into a relationship with Jesus?

26.

The Table and the Tower

GENESIS 10:1-11:32

We have studied the great flood that had a dramatic effect on the world.

1. The environment changed completely from a balanced, cooperative one to an environment of decay, drastic weather and challenge in which to live (climate continues to change).
2. The society was wiped out and a new one was begun through Noah's three sons and wives.
3. The spiritual promise was kept alive through Noah and then through his son Shem and his descendants.

The "wide view" of that time described the destruction of the world and the changes that took place along with God's promise to sustain man in the future. The rainbow covenant was given as a promise to preserve the world from a water catastrophe in the future.

The "close-up view" of that time detailed the interaction between Noah and his sons and his prophecies concerning each of them:

1. That Ham and his descendants would be servants of the world as well as his brothers.
2. That Shem would excel in spiritual things (the Jews came through his lineage).
3. That Japheth would prosper and be at peace with his brother Shem.

This discussion of future generations widens in the 10th and 11th chapters to include more information about the descendants of these men who eventually developed into various nations.

We follow this to a point in history where the explosion of tongues and cultures takes place and where the Bible will no longer trace the development of various subcultures but will once again go into a close-up view of one man and the nation of which he will become the father. This brings us to the two main items ready for our present discussion, the *Table of Nations* and the *Tower of Babel*.

TABLE OF NATIONS - CHAPTER 10

Chapter ten of Genesis contains written information that archaeologists say does not appear anywhere else. The records of ancient civilizations that existed in those days are not recorded in any other document; however, artifacts to substantiate this record have been found.



The Bible is the only document that confirms the existence of these peoples and is very accurate according to archaeological findings.

- **Dr. William F. Albright, archaeologist.**

¹ Now these are the records of the generations of Shem, Ham, and Japheth, the sons of Noah; and sons were born to them after the flood. ² The sons of Japheth were Gomer and Magog and Madai and Javan and Tubal and Meshech and Tiras. ³ The sons of Gomer were Ashkenaz and Riphath and Togarmah. ⁴ The sons of Javan were Elishah and Tarshish, Kittim and Dodanim. ⁵ From these the coastlands of the nations were separated into their lands, every one according to his language, according to their families, into their nations.

Here, Japheth and Shem are not named according to birth order but to accommodate the fact that Shem is the one keeping the record of the "sons of Noah."

Allowing for the general change in names, researchers follow these sons as the fathers of different nations:

- His ancestors include modern day Europe, India, some Middle Eastern countries.
- It is the first time the term "gentiles" is used, it means "nation" and more specifically, "foreign nation". This verse was written after the tower of Babel because it describes an event (the difference in language) that occurred only then.

⁶ The sons of Ham *were* Cush and Mizraim and Put and Canaan. ⁷ The sons of Cush *were* Seba and Havilah and Sabtah and Raamah and Sabteca; and the sons of Raamah *were* Sheba and Dedan. ⁸ Now Cush became the father of Nimrod; he became a mighty one on the earth. ⁹ He was a mighty hunter before the Lord; therefore it is said, "Like Nimrod a mighty hunter before the Lord." ¹⁰ The beginning of his kingdom was Babel and Erech and Accad and Calneh, in the land of Shinar. ¹¹ From that land he went forth into Assyria, and built Nineveh and Rehoboth-Ir and Calah, ¹² and Resen between Nineveh and Calah; that is the great city. ¹³ Mizraim became the father of Ludim and Anamim and Lehabim and Naphtuhim ¹⁴ and Pathrusim and Casluhim (from which came the Philistines) and Caphtorim. ¹⁵ Canaan became the father of Sidon, his firstborn, and Heth ¹⁶ and the Jebusite and the Amorite and the Girgashite ¹⁷ and the Hivite and the Arkite and the Sinite ¹⁸ and the Arvadite and the Zemarite and the Hamathite; and afterward the families of the Canaanite were spread abroad. ¹⁹ The territory of the Canaanite extended from Sidon as you go toward Gerar, as far as Gaza; as you go toward Sodom and Gomorrah and Admah and Zeboiim, as far as Lasha. ²⁰ These are the sons of Ham, according to their families, according to their languages, by their lands, by their nations.

Shem lists the genealogy of Japheth to the second generation; for Ham he gives three and for his own, five. This was to make sure that all nations would be traced and the origin and development of each was recorded.

Ham's descendants include many of the peoples in the area of Syria, Iraq, Arabia, Egypt and African nations as well as the Asian people and original peoples of North and South America.

He mentions one person in particular and that is Nimrod, who was Ham's grandson. His name means "rebellion" or "let us rebel" and suggests that the power of sin was already growing strong in the hearts of men. God has given commands to disperse, to replenish the earth, and to honor Him.

We see in Nimrod's actions in verses 9 to 11 that instead of dispersing, he tried to consolidate different groups under his leadership. He built a complex of cities with a capital (Babel) with himself as king.

That he was a great hunter suggests that he may have been a great warrior, one with weapons. This was not in God's plan, for a man to be king over other men, to receive honor instead of God, to enrich oneself instead of replenishing the earth.

We see the seeds of the eventual rebellion being sown here in the family of Nimrod. The Canaanites eventually come from Ham and much of their history is listed here. Again, Shem mentions that these things were written after the division of nations and tongues at Babel, probably to secure the original history of each group.

²¹ Also to Shem, the father of all the children of Eber, *and* the older brother of Japheth, children were born. ²² The sons of Shem *were* Elam and Asshur and Arpachshad and Lud and Aram. ²³ The sons of Aram *were* Uz and Hul and Gether and Mash. ²⁴ Arpachshad became the father of Shelah; and Shelah became the father of Eber. ²⁵ Two sons were born to Eber; the name of the one *was* Peleg, for in his days the earth was divided; and his brother's name *was* Joktan. ²⁶ Joktan became the father of Almodad and Sheleph and Hazarmaveth and

Jerah ²⁷ and Hadoram and Uzal and Diklah ²⁸ and Obal and Abimael and Sheba ²⁹ and Ophir and Havilah and Jobab; all these were the sons of Joktan. ³⁰ Now their settlement extended from Mesha as you go toward Sephar, the hill country of the east. ³¹ These are the sons of Shem, according to their families, according to their languages, by their lands, according to their nations.

³² These are the families of the sons of Noah, according to their genealogies, by their nations; and out of these the nations were separated on the earth after the flood.

Shem now describes his own genealogy by describing himself as the father of all the Ebers (from this word comes the term Hebrew) which was used by the people to describe Abraham in Genesis 14:13 who was a descendant of Eber.

He mentions that the son of Eber was Peleg (vs. 25) and that during this time the earth was divided, referring to the linguistic and geographical division that took place after the incident at the tower of Babel. The significant person in the line is Arphaxad because he is in the line of the promised seed to Abraham. Shem's descendants include the Middle Eastern people including the Jews.

He summarizes his material in verse 32 saying that these are the origins of all the nations that were to follow. In providing this, Shem establishes a historical link between the ancient patriarchs and the modern nations. His table of nations includes 70 families listed (there may have been more) but this number becomes significant in future Jewish writings:

- 70 elders (Numbers 11)
- 70 scholars translated the Old Testament from Hebrew into Greek
- 70 years of captivity
- 70 leaders in the Sanhedrin, etc.

This is the end of the use of the wide-angle view of history. The writer moves in once again to a close-up view of one incident that had as much

impact on the social structure of the human race as the flood had on the environment, the tower of Babel.

TOWER OF BABEL - CHAPTER 11

In the first few verses of chapter eleven, we see the seeds of pagan religion begin to be sown and the results of this sin. In chapter ten we read of Nimrod the great ruler and city builder. He is probably the one leading this particular effort here.

¹ Now the whole earth used the same language and the same words.

Before Babel, the entire population spoke only one language. Some phonologists believe that the language was Hebrew because certain symbols from the most ancient of discovered artifacts only find correlation in the Hebrew language. Certainly it is the oldest recorded language. Shem was the father of the Hebrews. (Note: Chinese is the oldest continually written language, 4,500 years).

This was to support God's original purpose of brotherhood and a cooperative colonization as well as the habitation of the earth.

² It came about as they journeyed east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there.

We see the migration from Ararat take place and a concentration of peoples in what is presently known as Iraq.

³ They said to one another, "Come, let us make bricks and burn *them* thoroughly." And they used brick for stone, and they used tar for mortar. ⁴ They said, "Come, let us build for ourselves a city, and a tower whose top *will reach* into heaven, and let us make for ourselves a name, otherwise we will be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth."

The purpose of God to scatter and colonize is now challenged.

1. They want to remain together in a centralized place.
2. They begin a brick making industry as a way to provide work and supplies to establish an urban center.
3. The new philosophy is to avoid being scattered and to establish a physical monument that will represent the religious aspect of the people's experience, as well as their unity and strength.

Of course, the thing that represents the people's religious beliefs, their faith, is obedience, not sacrifice or monuments.

This area is the ancient beginning of Babylon from which all the ancient occult, pagan practices began. The Tower is the first such pagan attempt to replace the worship of the creator with the worship of the created. It did not go to heaven but represents heaven and its hosts.

Instead of obeying God, the people built a great city and a great religious monument thinking that they could do what they wanted and still please God.

⁵ The Lord came down to see the city and the tower which the sons of men had built. ⁶ The Lord said, "Behold, they are one people, and they all have the same language. And this is what they began to do, and now nothing which they purpose to do will be impossible for them.

The problem is now established. The unity of man based on his common language has been used to create a rebellion that threatens God's ultimate plan.

The plan is to bring the savior, but in this new order, the memory and worship of God as well as His promise will be completely forgotten and replaced.

That man can do anything means that without the restraint of God's Word, man can fall into any wickedness leading to his complete self-

destruction. God, therefore, will intervene once again but not with a destructive flood.

⁷ Come, let Us go down and there confuse their language, so that they will not understand one another's speech." ⁸ So the Lord scattered them abroad from there over the face of the whole earth; and they stopped building the city. ⁹ Therefore its name was called Babel, because there the Lord confused the language of the whole earth; and from there the Lord scattered them abroad over the face of the whole earth.

The strength of the people is a common language through which one leader is manipulating them. The way to dissolve this power is to multiply the tongues. In doing so God caused confusion in the building of a central location. The result was that migration (which God wanted) soon began along with population expansion and cultural diversification.

Since these were smaller groups or tribes that shared a language, the marrying was done within a smaller circle. This smaller circle of reproduction is one reason for the faster rate of genetic mutations and considered the primary factor in the development of different hair, skin and eye types.

Since this was early in man's development, family intermarriage was still genetically possible without danger. By the time of Moses, however, there were express laws forbidding it. The giving of language at the creation of Adam was a miracle and the multiplying of tongues at Babel was a similar miracle.

It is interesting to note that the first miracle performed when God's plan for salvation is finally revealed at Pentecost is speaking in tongues, the ability to speak in unknown languages in order to preach to all men in their own language.

The word Babel means to mingle or mix and this is why this term is given here.

¹⁰ These are *the records of* the generations of Shem. Shem was one hundred years old, and became the father of Arpachshad two years after the flood; ¹¹ and Shem lived five hundred years after he became the father of Arpachshad, and he had *other* sons and daughters.

¹² Arpachshad lived thirty-five years, and became the father of Shelah; ¹³ and Arpachshad lived four hundred and three years after he became the father of Shelah, and he had *other* sons and daughters.

¹⁴ Shelah lived thirty years, and became the father of Eber; ¹⁵ and Shelah lived four hundred and three years after he became the father of Eber, and he had *other* sons and daughters.

¹⁶ Eber lived thirty-four years, and became the father of Peleg; ¹⁷ and Eber lived four hundred and thirty years after he became the father of Peleg, and he had *other* sons and daughters.

¹⁸ Peleg lived thirty years, and became the father of Reu; ¹⁹ and Peleg lived two hundred and nine years after he became the father of Reu, and he had *other* sons and daughters.

²⁰ Reu lived thirty-two years, and became the father of Serug; ²¹ and Reu lived two hundred and seven years after he became the father of Serug, and he had *other* sons and daughters.

²² Serug lived thirty years, and became the father of Nahor; ²³ and Serug lived two hundred years after he became the father of Nahor, and he had *other* sons and daughters.

²⁴ Nahor lived twenty-nine years, and became the father of Terah; ²⁵ and Nahor lived one hundred and nineteen years after he became the father of Terah, and he had *other* sons and daughters.

²⁶ Terah lived seventy years, and became the father of Abram, Nahor and Haran.

- Genesis 11:10-26

At verse 10 another writer (Terah) takes up the history of the seed by mentioning how long Shem lived and establishing the connection

between Shem and himself through Arphaxad through to Terah and Abram, who was later to be called Abraham.

No social history or numbers are given here except for the ages of the patriarchs. The purpose is to trace the key people in the line through which the promise came.

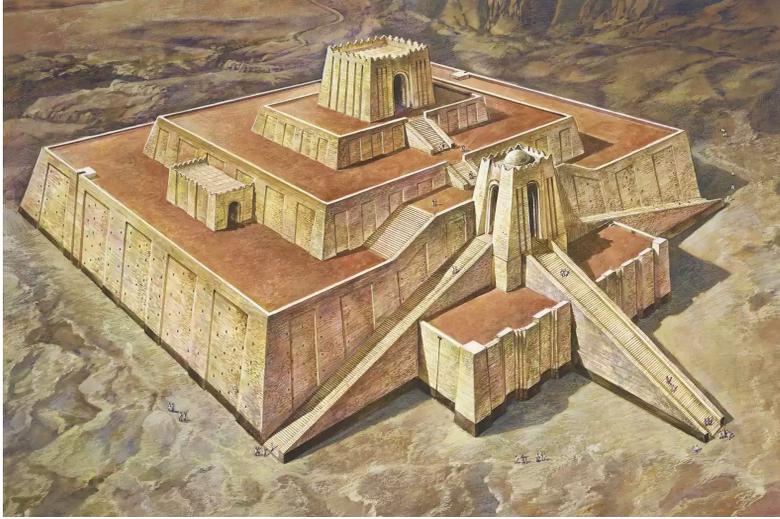
²⁷ Now these are *the records of* the generations of Terah. Terah became the father of Abram, Nahor and Haran; and Haran became the father of Lot. ²⁸ Haran died in the presence of his father Terah in the land of his birth, in Ur of the Chaldeans. ²⁹ Abram and Nahor took wives for themselves. The name of Abram's wife was Sarai; and the name of Nahor's wife was Milcah, the daughter of Haran, the father of Milcah and Iscah. ³⁰ Sarai was barren; she had no child. ³¹ Terah took Abram his son, and Lot the son of Haran, his grandson, and Sarai his daughter-in-law, his son Abram's wife; and they went out together from Ur of the Chaldeans in order to enter the land of Canaan; and they went as far as Haran, and settled there. ³² The days of Terah were two hundred and five years; and Terah died in Haran.

Terah's record now ends and another writer picks up the narrative (probably Isaac - Genesis 25:19). He names the three sons of Terah (Abram, Nahor and Haran) and gives a brief family description of each: Haran died young; Nahor married his dead brother's daughter (his niece); Abram married his half-sister Sarai, who is said to be barren at this time.

Chapter eleven closes with Terah leaving Ur (a wicked city) to go northward to Haran to settle and eventually die there. There is some speculation that he was called to go to Canaan but refused to go further than Haran at which time God called Abram to leave and go forward to Canaan.

Researchers believe that the Tower of Babel was a form of tower called a ziggurat (ancient word meaning "to build a raised area"). There are still remains of these types of towers in Iraq and Iran. They are not just a single tower but a series of buildings in a complex with a shrine built at

the top. These were usually at the center of an area around which a city was built.



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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Summarize the events from Genesis 10 and 11.
2. What is the difference between the genealogical listing in Genesis 10 and that previously of Adam and what is its significance?
3. Summarize the events of Genesis 11 and discuss their significance.
4. How can you use this lesson to grow spiritually and help others come into a relationship with Jesus?

27.

Abraham: Father of a Nation

GENESIS 12:1-20

In chapters ten and eleven, the narrators trace the genealogy of the nations from Noah's sons down through several generations. We looked at possible national origins derived from the names of these people and the names found in early civilizations:

- **Japheth** – Europe, India, Middle East;
- **Ham** – Africa, Middle East, Orient, North and South America;
- **Shem** – Middle East, Jews.

The key idea was that all civilizations originally descend from these three. The next factor that had a profound significance on society was the events surrounding the tower of Babel.

- God told them to fill the earth.
- Man concentrated in one place and fell into a form of paganism.
- God separated them by multiplying their languages.
- This multiplication of languages set into motion the physical and geographic changes that resulted in different cultures, physiology and countries that we have today.

We then see two other writers pick-up the story from Shem who is the one writing the record that includes the tower of Babel incident.

Terah, a descendant of Shem provides a short record that includes the genealogy from Shem to himself through to Abram, who was later to become Abraham.

The story now shifts from a wide view of society and the world (having given us the details of how the world began and how it and society progressed). The narrative now shifts to a close-up of one man and his descendants. It will now remain in this close-up mode until the end showing how God will bring onto the stage of humanity the Savior, Jesus Christ.

After Terah's record, another writer, Isaac, will continue telling the story of Abraham. He begins by naming the three sons of Terah and a little of their history.

GENESIS 11:27-32:

- **Haran** – dies young
- **Nahor** – married his dead brother's daughter (his niece)
- **Abram** – married his half-sister Sarai who is said to be barren.

We have few details but it seems that Terah along with his son Abram, Abram's wife Sarai, and his grandson, Lot, left Ur in order to make his way to Canaan. They only got as far as the city of Haran (probably built and established in memory of his dead son Haran) and remained there.

The story of Terah ends here. He may have refused to go on, he may have been sick, we do not know. All we do know is that his original journey was to Canaan and he never made it. This sets the scene for the call of Abram.

ABRAM

THE CALL – 12:1-9

¹ Now the Lord said to Abram,
"Go forth from your country,
And from your relatives
And from your father's house,
To the land which I will show you;
² And I will make you a great nation,
And I will bless you,
And make your name great;
And so you shall be a blessing;
³ And I will bless those who bless you,
And the one who curses you I will curse.
And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed."
⁴ So Abram went forth as the Lord had spoken to him; and Lot
went with him. Now Abram was seventy-five years old when
he departed from Haran. ⁵ Abram took Sarai his wife and Lot
his nephew, and all their possessions which they had
accumulated, and the persons which they had acquired in
Haran, and they set out for the land of Canaan; thus they came
to the land of Canaan. ⁶ Abram passed through the land as far
as the site of Shechem, to the oak of Moreh. Now the Canaanite
was then in the land. ⁷ The Lord appeared to Abram and said,
"To your descendants I will give this land." So he built an altar
there to the Lord who had appeared to him. ⁸ Then he
proceeded from there to the mountain on the east of Bethel,
and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the
east; and there he built an altar to the Lord and called upon
the name of the Lord. ⁹ Abram journeyed on, continuing
toward the Negev.

Terah has died and the Lord calls Abram to leave Haran to finish the journey to Canaan.

In Acts 7:2, Stephen says that God called Abram while he lived in Ur which may mean that both Terah and Abram were called but Terah would not go further than Haran. The Lord calls him to leave Haran and the things that are keeping him there which would be his country, his culture, his people, and his family. He has to leave everything, but God makes a series of promises to him:

1. He will give rise to a great nation.
2. He himself will become a great man.
3. He will bless others with his life.
4. God will protect him.
5. The entire world throughout history will be blessed through Abram.

These sound like great blessings but consider Abram's state:

- A. He had to completely forsake home, family, nation, and culture in order to have a great nation built from himself.
- B. He had to abandon the safety of what was familiar in order to go into the unknown with only the promise of God's protection but no visible sign of it.

The journey to Canaan was approximately 400 miles with his family and servants along with livestock and possessions.

In verse 7 the Lord "appears" to Abram. It is the first time that this is expressed in this way – that the Lord appeared, and it was to add one more thing to the list of promises.

6. That the land he was living in would one day be the possession of his people.

Therefore, we see Abram worship the Lord for the first time in the land of Canaan. At this point Abram is living like a nomad traveling southward towards Egypt.

ABRAM IN EGYPT – 12:10-20

What begins as a test of faith ends in a loss of faith and effectiveness from Abram and Sarai.

¹⁰ Now there was a famine in the land; so Abram went down to Egypt to sojourn there, for the famine was severe in the land.

A famine comes up which threatens their security and well-being. Abram decides to escape it by going into Egypt.

- Note that he did not consult God in the matter or make any indication that he relied on any of the promises.
- God promised He would care for them but when this was put to the test, Abram took matters into his own hands.

Going to Egypt seemed like a good idea, it was close by, prosperous, and they had no home or family in Canaan to hold them back. The problem, of course, was:

1. God had told him to go to Canaan not Egypt.
2. God had promised to care for them and that did not change even if there was a famine.
3. Egypt was a pagan and immoral place that had food but also much temptation.

¹¹ It came about when he came near to Egypt, that he said to Sarai his wife, "See now, I know that you are a beautiful woman; ¹² and when the Egyptians see you, they will say, 'This is his wife'; and they will kill me, but they will let you live.

¹³ Please say that you are my sister so that it may go well with me because of you, and that I may live on account of you."

In these days a foreigner had no rights and a beautiful woman (especially a foreign one) was a profitable commodity.

Once in Egypt, they saw that there was danger of being killed or enslaved for this reason and so they concocted a plan whereby they said (which was partially true) that they were brother and sister. If someone wanted her, they would negotiate and not kill him because she was available as his sister. They also forgot God's other promise to protect them from harm.

¹⁴ It came about when Abram came into Egypt, the Egyptians saw that the woman was very beautiful. ¹⁵ Pharaoh's officials saw her and praised her to Pharaoh; and the woman was taken into Pharaoh's house. ¹⁶ Therefore he treated Abram well for her sake; and gave him sheep and oxen and donkeys and male and female servants and female donkeys and camels.

Not only was Sarai noticed, she was noticed by the princes who served Pharaoh. They praised her (*Hallah* – Hebrew word used for praise in worship used first time here for Sarai). It seems that her beauty and her character were worthy of such praise that she was not raped or taken as slave but the Pharaoh took her into his harem in order to prepare her for marriage. Abram was treated well because of her.

Their plan was working well: they avoided the famine, they avoided attack and they were becoming wealthy through the generosity of the king. Their plan was also causing some problems: They were losing each other, they were jeopardizing the seed of the savior and were forfeiting all the promises that God had made to them. It was a long-term loss for a short-term gain.

¹⁷ But the Lord struck Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarai, Abram's wife. ¹⁸ Then Pharaoh called Abram and said, "What is this you have done to me? Why did you not tell me that she was your wife? ¹⁹ Why did you say, 'She is my sister,' so that I took her for my wife? Now then, here is your wife, take her and go." ²⁰ Pharaoh commanded *his*

men concerning him; and they escorted him away, with his wife and all that belonged to him.

At this point God intervenes. We do not know what and for how long but Pharaoh's family and household begin to suffer plagues. In some way the Pharaoh is made to understand that the cause of his problems is Sarai, and that she is Abraham's wife. He is also made to understand that these people are protected by God. Otherwise, he would have killed them both or at least have killed Abram and enslaved Sarai. We see instead that the Pharaoh gives a sharp rebuke to Abram. In the rebuke the king reproaches him not only for his deception but his lack of faith:

1. He is upset that he might have been fooled into taking another man's wife and suffered the wrath of God for this. He was also upset that Abraham, a man he blessed and seemed to admire (gifts, favors, etc.), would do this to him.
2. He, at least, believed enough in the God of Abram to spare him and send him on his way. His rebuke is especially harsh because at this point he believes God more than Abram does since he has obeyed God in sparing these people.

In the end he does not take her as wife, allows Abram to keep all of his wealth, and assures them the protection they need to leave the country.

LESSONS

Abram's early experiences in his walk with God provide some important lessons for us even, in this day and age:

1. It's about faith, not famine

We see the small picture but God sees the entire picture. Abram saw only food as the problem and compromised himself because of it. God used the famine as a way of testing Abram's faith. Ultimately Abram would be a model for faith, not how to survive a famine, and so the famine served God's purpose in testing faith, not Abram's resourcefulness in finding food. For every believer since Abram until today and forward until Jesus returns, it is always about faith, not famine or whatever else happens to

us. If we could learn to interpret the good and bad that occurs in our lives as issues of faith (how will our faith react) we would probably have fewer famines and survive well the ones we do experience.

2. A promise is a promise

The geography or the circumstances did not change God's promises to Abraham. His problem was that he did not claim these promises through worship and prayer when the time came, instead he took matters into his own hands. God's promises are sure not because the circumstances favor their fulfillment, they are sure for three reasons:

- God never lies, a promise is a promise.
- Nothing is impossible with God so He can always fulfill His promises.
- His promise depends on Him, not on us. He saved Abram even after Abram failed the test. Why? Because He promised!

3. You cannot share a faith you do not have

The Egyptians and the Pharaoh were impressed by Abram and Sarai. However, after the deception was found out, they were sent out of the country. Can you imagine if they would have relied on God and gave their witness of God's great power? They might have made the Pharaoh and his household believers in God. As it was, an opportunity to witness to a mighty king was lost because the witnesses themselves were unfaithful.

We do not all come before kings, but time and opportunity bring us close to many people who are interested in us because they see the light of faith shining in our lives. We need to be careful that our actions do not contradict the faith we profess to have.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Summarize Genesis 12:1-9 and discuss how it serves as a model for Christians today.
2. Summarize Genesis 12:10-20. Why, for all that God had shown and promised to Abraham, did he go to Egypt, and what is the implication for us?
3. How can you use this lesson to grow spiritually and help others come into a relationship with Jesus?

28.

Abraham and Lot

GENESIS 13:1-18

We have now entered the section of Genesis where the focus shifts to one individual and his family line. The Bible has given us the origins of the two main elements that affect all of us today:

1. The natural world and how it has become what it is – Noah's flood.
2. The moral and social condition of the world, how and why we came to be what we are – sin of Adam, tower of Babel.

The environment has not changed, other than continue its rate of degeneration, and the social situation has not changed either. We still read about the same kinds of problems caused by sin that plagued man thousands of years ago.

The difference, is that the Bible will no longer focus on the causes of man's predicament but will now explain the cure. God's plan to send a savior will be traced beginning with one man and his family. From this man, Abraham, God will build a nation through whom the savior will come.

In the previous chapter, we were introduced to Abram and followed him as he took his first steps of faith.

1. The call to leave his home and go to the land of Canaan.
2. His test of faith in Egypt where he failed to rely on God for help and protection.
3. The fact that God rescued him anyways in order to protect the seed of promise that he carried.

Now we continue with his journey and relationship to Lot, his nephew.

LOT'S CHOICE – CHAPTER 13

ABRAM'S RETURN

We know that Abram went up from Egypt to the Negev, he and his wife and all that belonged to him, and Lot with him.

² Now Abram was very rich in livestock, in silver and in gold.

³ He went on his journeys from the Negev as far as Bethel, to the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Bethel and Ai, ⁴ to the place of the altar which he had made there formerly; and there Abram called on the name of the Lord.

Note that Abram leaves Egypt wealthier than when he went in. He still has his wife and nephew Lot, and he is now a rich man.

The problem is that he does not have a clear conscience. Jesus said, "What will you give in exchange for your soul?" Abram had exchanged security for his soul and felt guilty.

Notice that upon leaving Egypt he immediately returns to the first place he had settled when he originally came to Canaan. Abram goes back to the original altar where he first called upon God's name. He once again calls on God's name in order to renew that relationship and ask for forgiveness.

ABRAM'S DECISION – VS. 5-13

⁵ Now Lot, who went with Abram, also had flocks and herds and tents. ⁶ And the land could not sustain them while dwelling together, for their possessions were so great that they were not able to remain together. ⁷ And there was strife between the herdsmen of Abram's livestock and the herdsmen of Lot's livestock. Now the Canaanite and the Perizzite were dwelling then in the land.

The fact that they were rich was not a blessing to them but rather a burden. Perhaps Lot lost respect because of what had happened; perhaps their wealth weighed them down so much that it motivated them to settle somewhere rather than be mobile; perhaps materialism bred competition and self-interest.

The Bible says that eventually they could not dwell together peacefully because there was a competition for resources. This competition caused strife between their servants and also produced a bad witness before the people of the land, the Perizzites, and the Canaanites.

Abram has learned a lesson about making a proper witness before non-believers so he offers to solve the conflict.

⁸ So Abram said to Lot, "Please let there be no strife between you and me, nor between my herdsmen and your herdsmen, for we are brothers. ⁹ Is not the whole land before you? Please separate from me; if *to* the left, then I will go to the right; or if *to* the right, then I will go to the left." ¹⁰ Lot lifted up his eyes and saw all the valley of the Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere—*this was* before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah—like the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt as you go to Zoar. ¹¹ So Lot chose for himself all the valley of the Jordan, and Lot journeyed eastward. Thus they separated from each other. ¹² Abram settled in the land of Canaan, while Lot settled in the cities of the valley, and moved his tents as

far as Sodom. ¹³ Now the men of Sodom were wicked exceedingly and sinners against the Lord.

He gently appeals to Lot based on the fact that they are brethren and there should not be any strife between them. Note the way Abram solves the problem:

1. He describes the problem and does not try to lay blame. The problem was that they were brethren and there was strife between them and that was not right.
2. He proposes a solution that will solve the problem, not one that will aggravate it. He did not scheme or promote more quarreling. He did what was necessary to stop the fight.
3. He allowed Lot to take what he felt he needed first and trusted God to provide for himself. This was a deal that Lot could not refuse. The problem was having enough land to support their livestock, and Lot was given the choice of land and location.

LOT'S DECISION

The Bible says that the land Lot chose was, to his eyes, like the Garden of Eden (that his ancestors had spoken of) or like the lush area of Egypt that they had just left.

The land also had established cities so he chose all of the land and separated from Abram. Once again it seemed, on the surface, that Lot chose well and served himself advantageously. However:

- He displayed disrespect since Abram, as his elder, should have had first choice.
- He displayed selfishness in that he made no offer to share any of the fertile land with Abram.
- He displayed lack of spiritual wisdom because he was purposefully placing himself into an area that would be a temptation to him and his family. (At first, he pitched his tent near the city but eventually began to live in the city itself.)

- He also displayed foolishness in not recognizing the security that existed in remaining unified with his **only** relative and the **only** believer in the land.

All this done to promote his wealth and well-being.

GOD RENEWS HIS PROMISE

¹⁴ The Lord said to Abram, after Lot had separated from him, "Now lift up your eyes and look from the place where you are, northward and southward and eastward and westward; ¹⁵ for all the land which you see, I will give it to you and to your descendants forever. ¹⁶ I will make your descendants as the dust of the earth, so that if anyone can number the dust of the earth, then your descendants can also be numbered. ¹⁷ Arise, walk about the land through its length and breadth; for I will give it to you." ¹⁸ Then Abram moved his tent and came and dwelt by the oaks of Mamre, which are in Hebron, and there he built an altar to the Lord.

Once the separation is complete, it seems that Lot has gained the best in the deal: fertile land, water, and a developed city system.

Abram has the desert, the mountains, the sea but he continues to have the presence and promise of the Lord. God renews and expands His promise to Abram: all the land he sees, even that which he has given up, will be his and his descendants. Of course, the Jews did not continually possess the land throughout history and the Bible says that at the end of the world the heavens and earth will dissolve. The promise as we now understand it is that the Promised Land represents the kingdom of heaven, and the spiritual descendants of Abraham will possess this Kingdom forever.

Not only will he be the head of a great nation, that nation will be a blessing to others, will be great in number - too great to count, and will produce the Savior!

In relation to the other nations, the Israelites were rather a small group and remain so today. This promise as we now understand it in light of the

gospel refers to the spiritual descendants of Abram, who are the spiritual Israelites through Christ Jesus. These are a great number and continue to increase until Jesus comes.

Once again, Abram is encouraged by the Lord's renewed promise. After the separation with Lot he resettles himself and renews his worship and fellowship with the Lord.

ABRAM'S HISTORY

These chapters describe a world that has been confirmed by modern archaeology:

1. Ur was only known through the Bible until it was discovered in a 19th century archaeological dig.
2. Haran and other sites were also subsequently dug up.
3. Scientists found a civilization that was highly cultured with libraries, great cities, commerce and architecture.
4. Abram was in Egypt when that country was a great power and many of the pyramids were already old in his day!

The life and times of Abram are accurately depicted in the Bible. What you read in Genesis is a historical picture of that time which has been verified through modern archaeology. Not only is the history accurate but so are the lessons that it teaches about our own lives today.

LESSONS

1. God will take you back

Abram had received God's promises and had immediately discarded them. This is after God had appeared to him. Notice that when he returned to Canaan and renewed his prayer, God restored Abram and blessed him by renewing His promises. We sometimes feel that what we have done is so bad or so repetitive that God is fed-up with us. It even seems that at times we are fed-up with ourselves. This story shows that God is not only

ready to take us back but He is happy to take us back (note how He blessed Abram even more when Abram did the right thing with Lot).

2. Sin always has side effects

Abram and Lot came out of Egypt rich in material goods, however, the loss of respect because of Abram's actions divided them. They came out of Egypt rich in material goods but because they gained much of it through deception, it caused strife, self-centeredness and competition between the two families. The most dangerous lie that Satan promotes is that just one sin or just a little sin will not matter in the long run. *The wages of sin is death* (Romans 6:23) and sooner or later we receive the effect of every sin we commit.

3. God's Word is sure

For many years skeptics could say that the only proof of Ur's existence was found in the Bible and that was not credible evidence. For many years believers had to base their faith only on what the Word said about this matter. In the 19th century scientists proved that the Word was accurate, the skeptics were wrong and believers were justified in their faith. I think God helps our faith along with these types of discoveries from time to time and I am glad for it. However, there are many things in the Bible that remain strictly matters of faith – the Word says so and I believe it (i.e. end of the world, glorified bodies, destruction of Satan and death). It is our turn in our generation not to wait for science to prove our faith for us, but rather say, "The Bible says this and I believe it."

Some proof may come along to help us out from time to time but the Lord is looking for those, like Abram, who did not see but believed anyways. These are the true descendants of Abram that the Bible says will inherit the promises made to him.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Summarize the events of Genesis 13 with emphasis on the reason and reaction of Abraham's offer to Lot.
2. Read Romans 8:28 and discuss the possibility that God allowed the conflict between Abraham and Lot in order to bring about His renewed focus on Abraham. Also discuss how this impacts us today.
3. Share some examples from scripture where someone made a poor choice and departed from God's will but were restored. How does this affect us today?
4. How can you use this lesson to grow spiritually and help others come into a relationship with Jesus?

29.

Melchizedek: A 'Type' for Christ

GENESIS 14:1-24

We have begun our study of Abraham.

- He was a descendant of Shem.
- He was from Ur, a city in ancient Babylon (modern Iraq).
- His father, Terah, was called by God to leave Ur and go to the land of Canaan (Israel).
- His father made it to Haran and died there and God called Abram to continue the journey.
- Abram lived in the land, went to Egypt for a while during a famine.
- He was expelled from Egypt because of a deception concerning his wife but grew rich there.
- He and his nephew Lot separated, with Lot settling in the Jordan valley near the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah and Abram going to the mountainous regions.

We have also learned about God's promises or covenants with Abram:

1. He would begin a great nation.
2. He would become a great man.
3. His descendants would be a blessing to others.

4. God would protect him.
5. His descendants would usher in a worldwide blessing.
6. God would multiply his descendants.
7. He would ultimately own the land where he lived.

All of these promises gather into one promise as time goes on and ultimately all of them find their true fulfillment in a spiritual nature through Jesus Christ, the promised One.

We will now look at another great test of Abram's faith and meet an unusual figure in Old Testament history.

NORTHEASTERN KINGS

1. The war - 14:1-12

It seems that for a time Abram lived in relative peace and prosperity, however, in time a war broke out in this region. Apparently, there was a group of five city-states each with their own king scattered in the Jordan valley (Sodom and Gomorrah).

These five were in subjection to a powerful northern king called Chedorlaomer who ruled with the help of other local northern chieftains. This arrangement of paying tribute to the northern kingdom worked for 12 years but, as the Bible says, in the 13th year the five kings in the valley revolted and refused to pay or submit. This provoked an attack by the northern king and his allies. Verses 1 to 11 describe all the cities and towns the northern kings destroyed on their way south (to avoid an attack from the rear).

Finally, they arrived in the valley and totally defeated the five rebelling kings. During the looting and pillaging they took Lot, Abram's nephew, his family and property, and made off with them.

Lot was now living in Sodom but somehow remained a righteous man (II Peter 2:8) and so God would not allow him to be taken prisoner.

2. The rescue

¹³ Then a fugitive came and told Abram the Hebrew. Now he was living by the oaks of Mamre the Amorite, brother of Eshcol and brother of Aner, and these were allies with Abram.

¹⁴ When Abram heard that his relative had been taken captive, he led out his trained men, born in his house, three hundred and eighteen, and went in pursuit as far as Dan. ¹⁵ He divided his forces against them by night, he and his servants, and defeated them, and pursued them as far as Hobah, which is north of Damascus. ¹⁶ He brought back all the goods, and also brought back his relative Lot with his possessions, and also the women, and the people.

- Genesis 14:13-16

Abram finds out about the war and the capture of his nephew and prepares his men for battle. He is referred to as Abram the "Hebrew". Hebrew meant several things:

- One beyond the Euphrates, as a way to distinguish him from the Canaanites.
- A descendant of Eber, who had many descendants among Arab tribes.
- A moving tribe. A way to refer to any group of nomads at the time.

Ultimately it came to refer exclusively to the descendants of Abram.

He was a "chieftain" himself capable of mobilizing a good number for battle but was certainly outnumbered by the northern kings. His strategy was surprise, his strength was from the Lord and, like Gideon and David, he won a great victory that day.

There is no mention of this battle in ancient records but pagan kings never described their defeats, only their victories.

3. Melchizedek – 14:17-20

After the victory we have the appearance of one of the most unusual persons in the Bible: Melchizedek.

¹⁷ Then after his return from the defeat of Chedorlaomer and the kings who were with him, the king of Sodom went out to meet him at the valley of Shaveh (that is, the King's Valley).

Here we see that Abram's victory was not merely over one band of men who were guarding Lot but over the entire army and the king himself. A great victory made possible by God's promise to protect Abram.

¹⁸ And Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; now he was a priest of God Most High.

The term Melchizedek means "king of righteousness". His title was "king of Salem" which means "king of peace". Most scholars are convinced that this early city called Salem became Jerusalem.

Melchizedek was a priest of the Most High God which means that somehow (we do not know how) he worshipped the same God that Abram worshipped and was recognized as a priest to God even by Abram at this time.

He provided bread and wine either as a form of worship sacrifice or nourishment (if nourishment then he was wealthy).

He blessed him and said,

¹⁹ "Blessed be Abram of God Most High,
Possessor of heaven and earth;

Melchizedek blessed Abram. This means that he and Abram both accepted his higher position because the greater blesses the lesser in this society. He also uses a proper reference for God showing that he understands God's true nature and does not accept the pagan gods

around which he lives. He also shows that he is aware of Abram's promises from God and shares his hope.

²⁰ And blessed be God Most High,
Who has delivered your enemies into your hand."
He gave him a tenth of all.

He offers praise and thanksgiving to God recognizing that God is the one who has obtained this great victory through Abram. Then Abram gives a tithing (a portion) of all the spoils. This is a mark of respect, submission, and agreement.

The appearance of this person and what he does brings up several points:

What we have in the Bible is not the sum of all of God's work with man. We have enough to know about God, build faith, be saved and become Godly, but we do not have all the information about everything. Melchizedek was a priest, worshipped the true God and was recognized as such by Abram but the Bible does not say how he became this person.

MELCHIZEDEK IS A "TYPE"

God uses the billboard method in order to teach us. He will announce or "billboard" what is coming ahead in a variety of ways:

1. He will promise or warn. For example:
 - Forbidden fruit (life, death) – Genesis 2
 - Seed of woman – Genesis 3
 - The Flood (120 years) – Genesis 6
 - Rainbow covenant – Genesis 9

2. He will send a prophet to teach, warn, encourage or announce. For example:
 - Jeremiah – 70-year captivity
 - John the Baptist – coming of Christ

3. He will provide a "type"

A type is a person, thing, or event that resembles or personifies something that will come in the future. It helps the people become familiar with a person or idea before it actually comes on the scene. For example:

- The Ark = the church
- Animal sacrifice = Jesus' sacrifice
- Enslavement, liberation, wilderness, land of promise experience = the Christian's journey from lostness to salvation through faithfulness to final glorification in heaven.
- The Promised Land = heaven
- Elijah the prophet = John the Baptist.

Melchizedek is a type, a very special type:

- He is the type for the eternal priesthood of Christ.
- Aaron, Moses' brother, was a priest appointed by God and served as a type and model for all the priests who offered animal sacrifices under the Law of Moses.
- However, Aaron was not a good model to serve as a type to billboard the coming of Jesus and His work as a high priest, offering not animals as sacrifice but Himself. Aaron was sinful and weak, and he would die. He had to continually offer sacrifices each day.
- The Old Testament needed a better type to prefigure the role of Jesus as high priest: perfect, eternal, superior. God was not going to prefigure or to serve as a type for Himself so Melchizedek serves as this type.

Hebrews 7:1-10 explains how this is so. He is only a man but the way the Old Testament describes Melchizedek allows him to wear the cloak of the eternal high priest who would come later:

¹ For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the Most High God, who met Abraham as he was returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him, ² to whom also Abraham apportioned a tenth part of all *the spoils*, was first of all, by the translation *of his name*, king of righteousness, and then also king of Salem, which is king of peace.
- Hebrews 7:1-2

The titles the Bible gives him (king of righteousness and peace) will ultimately be fulfilled by Christ.

Without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like the Son of God, he remains a priest perpetually.
- Hebrews 7:3

The fact that the Word does not mention his genealogy does not mean that he does not have one, it simply means that his appearance in the Bible is presented in such a way as to suggest eternity.

Again, when the Christ comes, this appearance of immortality suggested by Melchizedek the type, will become a reality for the true high priest, Jesus Christ, the anti-type.

⁴ Now observe how great this man was to whom Abraham, the patriarch, gave a tenth of the choicest spoils. ⁵ And those indeed of the sons of Levi who receive the priest's office have commandment in the Law to collect a tenth from the people, that is, from their brethren, although these are descended from Abraham.
- Hebrews 7:4-5

The fact that Abram, the father of the Jews, paid tithes to Melchizedek shows that he was greater than Abram. In the same way the high priest who is after the "type" of Melchizedek is greater than the high priests who are descendants of Abraham.

Melchizedek prefigures, billboards, or educates us in advance about the special high priestly position that Christ would fulfill, that no other priestly type in the Old Testament could do.

4. The king of Sodom

²¹ The king of Sodom said to Abram, "Give the people to me and take the goods for yourself." ²² Abram said to the king of Sodom, "I have sworn to the Lord God Most High, possessor of heaven and earth, ²³ that I will not take a thread or a sandal thong or anything that is yours, for fear you would say, 'I have made Abram rich.' ²⁴ I will take nothing except what the young men have eaten, and the share of the men who went with me, Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre; let them take their share."

The rest of the chapter sees the king of Sodom, who also has been saved by Abram, try to reward him. Abram has learned his lesson about becoming rich at the hand of pagan kings and refuses, giving the spoils to his men.

In this way he gives God the complete glory for the victory and the blessings he has received (which was to save his nephew and now establish peace in his land and, for the neighboring pagan kings).

LESSONS

1. Flee from evil

Paul says, "*Bad company corrupts good morals.*" (I Corinthians 15:33) and "*...abstain from every form of evil*" (I Thessalonians 5:22). When we hang around trouble, trouble will hang around us. If we associate with troublemakers, they will eventually make trouble for us. Lot would have avoided the trouble he was in if he would have stayed away from these evil cities but he did not and was eventually caught up in their turmoil. We need to aggressively avoid people, places, and activity where evil reigns and trouble is part of the norm.

2. Destroy not delight

We need to avoid evil but not shirk our responsibility to combat evil and help those who are trapped by evil. There is a big difference between watching, associating with, participating in evil and standing up to, judging or removing evil. The difference between destroying evil and delighting in evil determines whose side you are on. Christians flee from evil as a pleasure but are not afraid to confront it in order to displace it with good and with right.

3. God is a patient teacher

Abram had many lessons to learn in order to become the man that God wanted him to be as the father of the Jewish nation and the "type" for all Christians who would be saved by faith. Even though he failed in Egypt and now succeeded in this battle and would later fail again several times in his life, God was a patient teacher in bringing him to full maturity. God has an image of each one of us as well. We are the "types" for faith, perseverance, courage, purity for our children, our brethren, our neighbors in Christ. God is patient to teach us all of our lessons until we, like Abraham, reach our full potential and perfection in Christ Jesus.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Summarize the events of Genesis 4:1-16 that led to the war and rescue of Lot. Discuss any significance you see from this event.
2. Summarize the events of the appearance and blessing of Melchizedek from Genesis 14:17-20 and discuss its significance.
3. How is Melchizedek a "type" for Christ? Why is it important for God to give us examples of His will?
4. What is significant about Abraham refusing the reward offered by the King of Sodom? (Genesis 14:21-24)
5. How can you use this lesson to grow spiritually and help others come into a relationship with Jesus?

30.

The Gospel in the Old Testament

GENESIS 15:1-21

We are studying the life of Abram, his journeys in Canaan and Egypt, his failures, and successes in trusting God to protect and provide for him and his meeting with the great "type" for Christ's future priesthood, Melchizedek, after his defeat of the northern kings in saving his nephew Lot. We will see the same patterns of promises and then failures as Abraham continues his journey of faith.

THE PROMISE RENEWED – CHAPTER 15

After the battles he has fought we see Abram feeling his own mortality, beginning to wonder how God is going to fulfill certain parts of the promise he has made.

After these things the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision, saying,

Do not fear, Abram,
I am a shield to you;
Your reward shall be very great.
- Genesis 15:1

God reassures Abram after the tremendous battle that he fought. There are some interesting ideas introduced in this particular verse:

1. First time the expression "word of the Lord" appears here to signify God Himself. In John the Word becomes flesh, but here for the first time the Lord comes to Abram as the Word.
2. The "word" is a vision of some sort, the Lord revealing Himself somehow to Abram in order to offer reassurance and renew the promise.
3. These are the first "I am" passages in the Bible. I am thy shield. I am thy reward.
4. Jesus often used this manner of speech to describe Himself: I am the light of the world; I am the way, the truth and the life; I am the door, the vine, the alpha and the omega.
5. The first, but not last time, the admonition "fear not" appears as a way of reassuring Abram. Adam heard the voice of the Lord and was afraid but Abram is told not to be afraid when he hears the voice of the Lord.
6. When Abram hears the word he is not afraid because he believes God.

Comparison between Adam and Abraham:

- Adam received a fig leaf to cover his shame, Abram receives a shield.
- Adam is the father of all men, Abram is the father of all who believe.
- Adam loses paradise, Abram is promised the Lord Himself, the creator of paradise as his reward.

² Abram said, "O Lord God, what will You give me, since I am childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?" ³ And Abram said, "Since You have given no offspring to me, one born in my house is my heir." ⁴ Then behold, the word of the Lord came to him, saying, "This man will not be your heir; but one who will come forth from your own body, he shall be your heir." ⁵ And He took him outside

and said, "Now look toward the heavens, and count the stars, if you are able to count them." And He said to him, "So shall your descendants be." ⁶ Then he believed in the Lord; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness.

Abram is comforted at God's word of encouragement but his brush with death now focuses him on the main issue and that is an heir.

- He hears God's promise of having many descendants in the future but so far he does not have a son of his own.
- What he sees is that his steward, who is not even a family member, will inherit everything. Apparently, Lot has not returned to live with him.

In this same vision the Lord assures him that he will, from his own seed, produce a child (still in the realm of possibilities because so far as he knows, he is not barren or sterile as he knows Sarai is).

God renews the promise and this time compares his future generations to the stars in heaven.

Another first here in verse 6 is the word "believe" and combined with the words "counted" and "righteousness" we have the core of the Christian faith described in this one verse. Let us look at each word:

- **Believe:** to accept as true; also means to trust, to support.
- **Counted:** originally meant to "weave" but came to mean to impute or regard, to consider. You give to someone certain credentials or credibility for a certain reason. For example, to give someone an "honorary" degree.
- **Righteousness:** first use in this way in the Bible. A moral justness or cleanliness. A virtuousness.

When these ideas are put together they teach that God gave Abram a moral rightness (that he did not otherwise have or obtain) because Abram accepted as true what God had promised him.

I explained earlier what a "type" was – a type is a person, event or thing that prefigures, billboards or prepares us for something, someone or some event in the future. For example, Melchizedek was a "type" for the priesthood of Christ. The Ark was a "type" for the church. Animal sacrifice was a "type" to prepare our minds to understand the sacrifice of Christ.

Abram is a type for every Christian. God imputes or gives or considers us righteous (morally acceptable to Him and thus worthy of heaven) because we believe what He tells us is true. What He tells us to believe is that Jesus is the Christ and that we should obey Him. If we believe in Jesus then several things naturally follow:

- We reject sinfulness as a way of life.
- We are baptized according to His command.
- We follow Him in this life into the next.

The confusion in the religious world is that some teach that so long as there is an intellectual assent or agreement that we accept as true what God has said, God imputes righteousness to us.

Our study of the life of Abraham will show that when Abram believed God, he was entering a relationship where his belief led him to serve and obey God throughout his entire life.

God did not impute righteousness upon him just because he **said** he believed **or** because he managed to do everything right. He imputed righteousness to him because his belief led him to enter into a faith relationship with God where he trusted God to fulfill His promises regardless of his ups and downs in their relationship.

That is why this story is here as a type, to prepare us for our own relationship with God. Each one of us has a relationship that is as deeply personal and involved as Abraham's was.

God imputes righteousness upon us because through faith, expressed in repentance and baptism (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38 - which is how God

commands believers to respond to Him: to express our belief), we enter into a lifetime relationship with Him.

We are then continually and fully righteous (we do not get any more pure or saved than at the moment of baptism), we continue to be fully righteous because we believe that God will accomplish all the promises He has made to us (resurrection, glorified bodies, eternal life) despite the ups and downs we experience in our walk with Him.

⁷ And He said to him, "I am the Lord who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans, to give you this land to possess it." ⁸ He said, "O Lord God, how may I know that I will possess it?" ⁹ So He said to him, "Bring Me a three year old heifer, and a three year old female goat, and a three year old ram, and a turtledove, and a young pigeon." ¹⁰ Then he brought all these to Him and cut them in two, and laid each half opposite the other; but he did not cut the birds. ¹¹ The birds of prey came down upon the carcasses, and Abram drove them away.

¹² Now when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and behold, terror *and* great darkness fell upon him.

¹³ *God* said to Abram, "Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, where they will be enslaved and oppressed four hundred years. ¹⁴ But I will also judge the nation whom they will serve, and afterward they will come out with many possessions. ¹⁵ As for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you will be buried at a good old age. ¹⁶ Then in the fourth generation they will return here, for the iniquity of the Amorite is not yet complete."

¹⁷ It came about when the sun had set, that it was very dark, and behold, *there appeared* a smoking oven and a flaming torch which passed between these pieces. ¹⁸ On that day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying,

"To your descendants I have given this land,
From the river of Egypt as far as the great river, the river Euphrates:

¹⁹ the Kenite and the Kenizzite and the Kadmonite ²⁰ and the Hittite and the Perizzite and the Rephaim ²¹ and the Amorite and the Canaanite and the Girgashite and the Jebusite."

In the balance of the chapter, Abram wants God to give him a sign that these things will be so. In Abram's time the idea of eternal life, as we think of it today (personal conscious existence without end), was not as developed as it is now. God has revealed to us, through His Word, a more complete idea of what eternal life is like.

For Abram, the idea of a son and descendants was as close to the concept of eternal life as he understood (the idea of living on through his descendants was why the matter was so important to him).

Therefore, as a sign, God gave him a vision of his future generations (good and bad). He then makes a covenant sacrifice between the two of them with interesting features:

1. Each of the five acceptable animals were laid out to sacrifice, cut in two with half of each placed on either side with a space in between. The fact that there were five indicates that the cost of the promise would be great. The custom of the day was that when a covenant was made each person would pass between the rows of the sacrifice to show that they were bound by the covenant that the sacrifice represented and ratified. The idea was that if either broke the covenant then the death of the animal would no longer be sufficient and the death of the offending participant might be required.
2. After the initial preparations, nothing happened immediately signifying how long it would take for God to fulfill this promise. Abram even had to chase away birds of prey who wanted to destroy the carcasses – a symbol of Satan's constant attempts to destroy God's relationship and promises to man.
3. The vision then takes a dark turn to describe the suffering of his descendants in Egypt and their eventual freedom.
4. The smoking furnace and flaming torch passing through between the sacrifice symbolizes God's presence passing through the two parts of the offering. Note that only God goes through the middle and not Abram (it was custom that both parties go through). This is to signify that the covenant needs only God's ratification to be complete. In a covenant between God and man, man agrees to

enter into it, but the conditions and guarantees that it will be fulfilled all belong to God.

5. God now clearly indicates the second part of His promise to Abram (the first was that he would father a son), and these would be the geographical boundaries of the land promise. From the desert in the south to the Euphrates in the north. All the peoples that would be conquered.
 - Under Solomon and Jeroboam (I Kings 8:65; II Kings 14:25) this promise was ultimately fulfilled in a physical way and the Jews did rule all of this land.
 - God also gives us a guarantee of our promise. His "Word" describes the resurrection of Jesus; His eventual return and judgment; the trouble we will suffer before the end comes (Revelation) and what we must do to remain faithful. The Word is our vision and guarantee of the future.

The vision reveals the fullness of God's promises that include prosperity, protection, and posterity are now made by God and confirmed by Him through a covenant.

LESSONS

1. We are saved by faith

What saves us is that we are morally perfect and acceptable to God. What makes us moral and pure is that God considers us this way, imputes this to us and gives us this condition freely and fully. What causes Him to give this to us is that we believe Him in the same way that Abram did. We enter into a relationship with God like he did. God says that He will accept us if we accept Christ and when we do He considers us acceptable to Himself. We initially express that belief by repenting of our sins and by being baptized (Acts 2:38) and we continue to be saved by continuing to believe.

We will see that Abram had many serious challenges after he entered into his faith relationship with God. The thing that kept him a righteous man while he was failing or succeeding was not his degree of success or failure, it was his belief that God would fulfill this promise despite his failings. Faith keeps you righteous, not perfectionism.

2. We will succeed by faith

Even though Abram had ups and downs, ultimately God fashioned him into a faithful servant. The promise is not that God will accept a bad person because he or she believes. The promise is that God will take a bad person who believes and make a righteous person and a faithful servant out of him.

Abram lived a long time and God made a great servant out of him, however, His promise to us is that whatever He does not finish here, He will complete in heaven.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Summarize Genesis 15:1-6 and answer the following questions:
 - What can we learn from Abraham based on this event?
 - How does the promise to Abram, regarding his descendants numbering more than the stars, directly apply to us?
 - Why would God delay giving children to Abraham and Sarah and how does that apply to us?
2. What is the significance of Genesis 15:7-19?
3. How do you define faith?
4. How can you use this lesson to grow spiritually and help others come into a relationship with Jesus?

31.

Sarai and Hagar's Conflict / Abram and Circumcision

GENESIS 16:1-17:27

We spoke of Abram as the great "type" for the Christian. After his victory over the northern kings and meeting with Melchizedek, Abram asks God for a son and a sign of His promises, something he had not done before.

The Bible says that God reiterates the promise of a son and future generations as well as a specific description of the land promise. In a key passage we are told that Abram believed these promises and because he believed God, God gave or imputed to Abram a moral righteousness. I made some important points about how fundamental this passage is for us as Christians:

1. It teaches us that the reason we are saved is because we are right with God and holy.
2. It teaches us that the reason we are right with God and holy is because we believe that He will give this to us through faith in Jesus Christ because we cannot accomplish it through perfectionism.
3. It teaches us that this faith is a lifelong relationship. Some things can be expressed in a verse "*Thou shall not steal*". Others require a longer time to demonstrate. The idea that salvation is based on faith can be said in one verse. The explanation that faith is not just intellectual assent but a lifelong relationship takes a little longer to explain.

The story of Abram takes another eight chapters to tell and most of it explains this lifelong relationship of faith that Abram had with God. There were highs and lows, sinfulness and great acts of courage but through it all Abram never stopped believing that God would ultimately give him what He promised. That is what saving faith is like.

Now we see Abram and Sarai live out that faith relationship with God and how it transformed them into godly people.

SARAI'S SOLUTION

¹ Now Sarai, Abram's wife had borne him no *children*, and she had an Egyptian maid whose name was Hagar. ² So Sarai said to Abram, "Now behold, the Lord has prevented me from bearing *children*. Please go in to my maid; perhaps I will obtain children through her." And Abram listened to the voice of Sarai. ³ After Abram had lived ten years in the land of Canaan, Abram's wife Sarai took Hagar the Egyptian, her maid, and gave her to her husband Abram as his wife. ⁴ He went in to Hagar, and she conceived; and when she saw that she had conceived, her mistress was despised in her sight.
- Genesis 16:1-4

Sarai's faith now begins to weaken and seeing that the future is supposed to hold a great number of generations from her, she begins to see her own barrenness as a shame and burden.

She decides to take action. Originally, to solve a problem, Abram was willing to share his wife with another man. Now it is Sarai's turn, in order to solve this problem she was willing to share her husband with another woman.

Hagar was a slave, probably taken when they lived in Egypt. According to the custom of the time, she was the property of Sarai and any children she had, with anyone, belonged to Sarai. It was also part of the customs of the time to reproduce children, as many as possible, through this type of action so they did not see this as adultery.

In doing, however, this they fell short of God's will in two ways:

First, even though it was custom and they felt no guilt about doing this, they were violating God's basic command that in marriage the partners were to be "one flesh" only. There was no deceit or seduction here, there was no prior lust as is characteristic in adulterous situations but they nevertheless violated the principle that in marriage the two become one and they are not to add any other.

I believe this is the principle that is violated today when people mix the sperm or eggs of people other than their marriage partners in order to produce children for couples who otherwise cannot naturally conceive. There is no lust, no deception, not even any intercourse, but by taking the egg or sperm of someone outside the marriage we violate the "one flesh" principle of the Bible. This is what Abram and Sarai did, and they lived to regret it because the following verses show the natural human tendencies that follow when we violate God's basic guidelines for marriage and family.

The second way she violated God's will was in taking charge of fulfilling God's promise. She saw no natural way for the promise to be fulfilled and so she devised a scheme to accomplish God's purpose. It was "the ends justify the means" type of thinking. However, the unrighteousness of man does not accomplish the righteousness of God. When God makes a promise He has both natural and supernatural ways of fulfilling it and Sarai did not understand this – but she would in time.

For example, God promises to provide for our needs and He does this through natural means. He promises to resurrect our bodies, this He does through supernatural means.

Sarai demonstrated that our short-term solutions do not always take into consideration God's power or God's plan for the long term.

HAGAR'S PROMISE

⁵ And Sarai said to Abram, "May the wrong done me be upon you. I gave my maid into your arms, but when she saw that

she had conceived, I was despised in her sight. May the Lord judge between you and me." ⁶ But Abram said to Sarai, "Behold, your maid is in your power; do to her what is good in your sight." So Sarai treated her harshly, and she fled from her presence.

The situation becomes intolerable because of the change in Hagar (she carries the master's child) and Sarai's loss of face (her barrenness is made more evident, more shameful). Abram washes his hands of the matter since it was not his idea in the first place. He should not have gone along with it but it was at Sarai's insistence. The girl is badly treated and runs away, probably trying to return to her home in Egypt.

⁷ Now the angel of the Lord found her by a spring of water in the wilderness, by the spring on the way to Shur. ⁸ He said, "Hagar, Sarai's maid, where have you come from and where are you going?" And she said, "I am fleeing from the presence of my mistress Sarai." ⁹ Then the angel of the Lord said to her, "Return to your mistress, and submit yourself to her authority."

She is found not too far away in the desert (too long a trip for a girl alone and pregnant). The angel tells her to return to her mistress and change her attitude (not to be proud but to submit to her).

¹⁰ Moreover, the angel of the Lord said to her, "I will greatly multiply your descendants so that they will be too many to count." ¹¹ The angel of the Lord said to her further, "Behold, you are with child, And you will bear a son; And you shall call his name Ishmael, Because the Lord has given heed to your affliction. ¹² "He will be a wild donkey of a man, His hand *will be* against everyone, And everyone's hand *will be* against him; And he will live to the east of all his brothers."

The angel tells her who and what will become of the child she is carrying.

ISHMAEL means "God hears" suggesting that she was praying to God for help, that in her time with Abram she learned of and believed in the true God.

She is told that her son will be a "wild ass of a man" one who would be in perpetual conflict with others. The long history of Arab peoples who are the descendants of Ishmael testifies to this fact that they have been in conflict with each other and the Jews from then until now and beyond.

She is also promised that her son and descendants would be many great nations.

¹³ Then she called the name of the Lord who spoke to her, "You are a God who sees"; for she said, "Have I even remained alive here after seeing Him?" ¹⁴ Therefore the well was called Beer-lahai-roi; behold, it is between Kadesh and Bered.

She called God *EL ROI*, the God who sees as a tribute to her faith. She called the well "the well of the Living One who sees."

¹⁵ So Hagar bore Abram a son; and Abram called the name of his son, whom Hagar bore, Ishmael. ¹⁶ Abram was eighty-six years old when Hagar bore Ishmael to him.

There is no mention of her return, only that she bears a son and that Abram names him Ishmael which demonstrates that Abram and Sarai believed her account of her meeting with the angel and accepted her back into their home.

THE COVENANT RENEWED – 17:1-8

Thirteen years pass by in silence and then when Abram is 99 years old, God appears to him once again and renews His covenant. This time there are a few changes:

- He calls Himself *El Shaddai* which means Almighty God suggesting that after a long period of silence God is ready to put into force His promises.
- He admonishes Abram to be careful to walk in fellowship with Him (not to fall into disbelief and disobedience).
- He changes his name to Abraham (meaning *Father of a multitude*).
- He also extends all of the former promises to Abram's descendants. The protection, land, nation, etc. will be not only for Abram but for all the people who will come from him after.

THE COVENANT CONFIRMED – VS. 9-14

⁹ God said further to Abraham, "Now as for you, you shall keep My covenant, you and your descendants after you throughout their generations. ¹⁰ This is My covenant, which you shall keep, between Me and you and your descendants after you: every male among you shall be circumcised. ¹¹ And you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskin, and it shall be the sign of the covenant between Me and you. ¹² And every male among you who is eight days old shall be circumcised throughout your generations, a *servant* who is born in the house or who is bought with money from any foreigner, who is not of your descendants. ¹³ A *servant* who is born in your house or who is bought with your money shall surely be circumcised; thus shall My covenant be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant. ¹⁴ But an uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin, that person shall be cut off from his people; he has broken My covenant."

In these verses God gives circumcision (to cut around) as a sign that would identify those who were included in the covenant with him. We know that circumcision has certain health benefits but this was only a minor consideration in the giving of this practice as a way of showing that

a person was in the covenant relationship with God. Circumcision represented many things:

1. The promises of God were made to the "seed" of Abram and so the physical organ that carried that seed from generation to generation would be permanently marked as a reminder of this.
2. The cutting around (what the word circumcision means and what it is, the cutting around of the foreskin on the penis) represented a complete enclosure of God's will.
3. It was a sign of faith:
 - Faith on the part of the mother and father who would have it done to their male children in obedience to God.
 - Faith on the part of the wife who could joyfully submit and enter a partnership with a man who was part of the covenant with God. In marriage, she would be witness of the covenant.
 - Faith on the part of the man who would continually be reminded by his own body that he belonged to God and he was not to use his body for sinful pleasure.
4. Circumcision was a sign of sanctification

The cutting away of the flesh represented the separation of that person from the sinful, fleshly world and entry into a particular – separate and sanctified group.

To refuse circumcision for oneself or one's family was to refuse all of these things and literally be cut off from the promises of God.

NAME CHANGE – VS. 15-27

In the last section of this chapter three significant things occur:

1. Name change – Sarai becomes Sarah which means princess.

2. God promises Abraham that Sarah herself will bear a son (this is the first mention) and that he shall be called Isaac (laughter) because that is what Abraham did from joy when he was told. Since she will be the mother of many nations her name is changed to "princess".
3. Abraham circumcises himself, his son and all his household. He even prays for Ishmael, since another takes his place, that God not forget him and God promises to make a great nation from him.

Now God is poised to fulfill one of His promises made to Abraham, his own child with Sarah.

LESSONS

1. God's way is always the right way

It is tempting to change or eliminate God's Word in various areas in order to accommodate new trends or pressures, but doing it God's way is always the right way. It may not be measured as successful or relevant by this world's standard but God's purpose and methods are judged only by God, not by man.

2. Circumcision is a "type" for baptism

Circumcision served to prepare us for the role of baptism in our lives:

- It was a response of faith to God.
- It served as a sign to identify believers.
- It was necessary to be part of the promise.

...and in Him you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in the removal of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ;
- Colossians 2:11

What Abraham did to his household with his hands, Christ does to us in the waters of baptism.

- He removes the flesh of our sins.
- He brings us into the promises.
- He gives us the Holy Spirit as the inward seal, represented by baptism as the outward seal of our salvation.

3. Wait for God

It took years between the promise and the completion but Abraham waited for God and continued to believe. You know he waited because he was happy to see Him and ready to obey when He finally came. Do not count the minutes or the days, count on the sureness of His promises and the time will not matter.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Discuss what was evidently missing from Sarai's solution to God's delay in providing an heir to Abraham and how this relates to our life.
2. How did Sarai's actions fall short of God's will?
How does this relate to us?
3. Describe Hagar's faith as compared to Sarai's.
What can we learn from this?
4. What was at the core of God giving Abraham a new name?
5. What is represented by requiring Abraham and his descendants to be circumcised?
6. How can you use this lesson to grow spiritually and help others come into a relationship with Jesus?

32.

Lot's Poor Choices

GENESIS 18:1-19:38

In our previous lessons we examined two main things:

1. The core idea of the Christian religion for which Abraham was a "type" - that we are saved by faith in God.
2. That faith in God is expressed in a lifelong relationship that includes trust, obedience and hope.

Within this second idea we saw that because of His grace, God allows for our failures within that lifelong relationship. It is not that He overlooks failures or does not care about them, it is that He understands human weakness and has provided for it through the cross of Jesus Christ.

In Abraham's case we see not only failure but we also see trust, progress and obedience because these are also features that are part of a lifelong relationship with God.

- Trust in that he relied on God to help him defeat the northern kings.
- Progress in that he refused the money and gifts from them and gave honor to God instead (which he had not done in Egypt).
- Obedience in that when God told him to circumcise himself and his household, he obeyed God exactly according to His Word.

We also looked at the significance of circumcision for Abraham and the Jews in later years:

- Sign of the transfer of the seed of promise.
- Enclosure (to cut around) of God's will.
- Sign of parental, conjugal, personal faith.
- Sign of sanctification or holiness.

Finally, we compared circumcision to baptism and studied how it was a "type" for baptism.

- Baptism is our response of faith.
- Baptism is a sign to identify believers.
- Baptism is necessary to be part of the promise.

In the next two chapters we will get away from ideas and types, as the story will describe not only Abraham's continuing journey but also the results of Lot's choices for his life as well (comparison of one who did not progress in his faith).

THE VISIT TO ABRAHAM – CHAPTER 18

In chapter 18 Abraham is visited by what seemed as first to be three men. The Bible says that one of them was the Lord and this can mean that the Lord appeared as a man to Abraham.

- God appeared to Moses as a burning bush.
- God appeared to Elijah as a wind.
- Why can God not appear as a man?

The difference between this and God's appearance as Jesus is that in this case He simply appears in the form of a man (like angels do) but in the case of Jesus He is actually born from a woman and naturally grows up as a man. The Bible spends little time on this, it merely states it. The purpose

of this visit is to announce to Abraham that Sarah would herself conceive the child that had been promised by God to Abraham.

Upon hearing the news we read that Sarah "laughed" within herself:

Sarah laughed to herself, saying, "After I have become old, shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?"
- Genesis 18:12

Her laugh was cynical, not joyful because she doubted that in her advanced age and condition she could even enjoy sex, let alone have children.

The Lord helps her faith by reassuring Sarah that what seems impossible for her is not too difficult for Him.

¹³ And the Lord said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh, saying, 'Shall I indeed bear *a child*, when I am *so old*?' ¹⁴ Is anything too difficult for the Lord? At the appointed time I will return to you, at this time next year, and Sarah will have a son." ¹⁵ Sarah denied *it* however, saying, "I did not laugh"; for she was afraid. And He said, "No, but you did laugh."

Upon their departure, Abraham learns of the second reason for their visit: the judgment of Sodom. Sodom was to be judged for its wickedness, not only in conduct but in refusing the witness it had received. Abraham had saved them from the northern kings, Melchizedek had lived righteously before them, Lot had dwelled as a righteous man among them and yet they were still wicked.

Abraham learns of this intention and intercedes once again for these people and especially his nephew Lot.

ABRAHAM'S INTERCESSION

²³ Abraham came near and said, "Will You indeed sweep away the righteous with the wicked?" ²⁴ Suppose there are fifty

righteous within the city; will You indeed sweep *it* away and not spare the place for the sake of the fifty righteous who are in it? ²⁵ Far be it from You to do such a thing, to slay the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous and the wicked are *treated* alike. Far be it from You! Shall not the Judge of all the earth deal justly?" ²⁶ So the Lord said, "If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare the whole place on their account." ²⁷ And Abraham replied, "Now behold, I have ventured to speak to the Lord, although I am *but* dust and ashes. ²⁸ Suppose the fifty righteous are lacking five, will You destroy the whole city because of five?" And He said, "I will not destroy *it* if I find forty-five there." ²⁹ He spoke to Him yet again and said, "Suppose forty are found there?" And He said, "I will not do *it* on account of the forty." ³⁰ Then he said, "Oh may the Lord not be angry, and I shall speak; suppose thirty are found there?" And He said, "I will not do *it* if I find thirty there." ³¹ And he said, "Now behold, I have ventured to speak to the Lord; suppose twenty are found there?" And He said, "I will not destroy *it* on account of the twenty." ³² Then he said, "Oh may the Lord not be angry, and I shall speak only this once; suppose ten are found there?" And He said, "I will not destroy *it* on account of the ten." ³³ As soon as He had finished speaking to Abraham the Lord departed, and Abraham returned to his place.

Abraham's intercession on behalf of the cities of the plain (including Sodom) had interesting aspects:

1. It was the first model of intercessory prayer in the Bible.
2. It acknowledges that God is both merciful and just, and counts on this (God is going to do the right thing).
3. Abraham asked God to spare the cities if ten righteous people were found – the exact number in Lot's family (Lot, his wife, two sons, two married daughters, two sons-in-law, two unmarried daughters). In the end only four were willing to leave and the city destroyed.

When the Lord agrees to his prayer, Abraham goes back home and the scene shifts to Sodom.

LOT AT THE GATES OF SODOM – CHAPTER 19

Now the two angels came to Sodom in the evening as Lot was sitting in the gate of Sodom. When Lot saw *them*, he rose to meet them and bowed down *with his face* to the ground.

- Genesis 19:1

Verse 1 sees Lot "at the gate of the city". This does not mean he was a vagrant with nothing to do but watch people go by. The "gate" was where the city council held their meetings, where the marketplace was; it was the center of trade and culture for the city and to "sit" there meant you were involved in the life of that city.

The Bible says that Lot was a righteous man and that his soul was vexed because of the wickedness of the city (II Peter 2:8). He was a godly man living in an ungodly place (of his own choosing). He had witnessed the same call as Abraham but wanted to belong to this world more than the next.

² And he said, "Now behold, my lords, please turn aside into your servant's house, and spend the night, and wash your feet; then you may rise early and go on your way." They said however, "No, but we shall spend the night in the square." ³ Yet he urged them strongly, so they turned aside to him and entered his house; and he prepared a feast for them, and baked unleavened bread, and they ate.

For various reasons (he knew the town was evil; it was the custom of the times; he recognized them as angels) Lot invites them to his home.

As was the custom, they refuse his invitation at first but then accept at his insistence. Lot prepares the meal himself, which may suggest that his wife was less hospitable than he. This is also the first mention of "leaven" in

the Bible and is usually related to corrupting influences (except when Jesus uses it to refer to the Kingdom).

⁴ Before they lay down, the men of the city, the men of Sodom, surrounded the house, both young and old, all the people from every quarter; ⁵ and they called to Lot and said to him, "Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us that we may have relations with them." ⁶ But Lot went out to them at the doorway, and shut the door behind him, ⁷ and said, "Please, my brothers, do not act wickedly. ⁸ Now behold, I have two daughters who have not had relations with man; please let me bring them out to you, and do to them whatever you like; only do nothing to these men, inasmuch as they have come under the shelter of my roof." ⁹ But they said, "Stand aside." Furthermore, they said, "This one came in as an alien, and already he is acting like a judge; now we will treat you worse than them." So they pressed hard against Lot and came near to break the door. ¹⁰ But the men reached out their hands and brought Lot into the house with them, and shut the door. ¹¹ They struck the men who were at the doorway of the house with blindness, both small and great, so that they wearied *themselves trying* to find the doorway.

This passage describes how that evening a mob formed outside of his house demanding that Lot turn over the men so they could "know" them. They become infuriated when he refuses. They even turn on Lot by accusing him of being a self-righteous foreigner.

This word "know" is used elsewhere in the Old Testament to describe sexual relations so the mob wanted to rape them. Scholars, sympathetic and in agreement with homosexuality, say that this passage means that the people just wanted to get to know, in a social way, these people. However, the following passages and the way the word "know" is used elsewhere disproves this.

Other scholars tell us that male rape and sodomy was also one way to show dominance and victory over an enemy so the mob may have wanted

to have sex not just for pleasure but to humiliate and dominate these foreigners and intimidate others who would go there.

Lot offers his virgin daughters to be raped instead of his guests. He may have recognized their true nature and wanted to save the town and the angels from disgrace. His sacrifice of his daughters showed that even though he brought it upon himself, he was sensitive to spiritual things and willing to make a sacrifice for righteousness sake. This action probably saved him.

The angels blind the mob and save Lot and his daughters from them.

¹² Then the *two* men said to Lot, "Whom else have you here? A son-in-law, and your sons, and your daughters, and whomever you have in the city, bring *them* out of the place; ¹³ for we are about to destroy this place, because their outcry has become so great before the Lord that the Lord has sent us to destroy it." ¹⁴ Lot went out and spoke to his sons-in-law, who were to marry his daughters, and said, "Up, get out of this place, for the Lord will destroy the city." But he appeared to his sons-in-law to be jesting.

Here is one of the saddest scenes of the Old Testament. Lot, a righteous man, who has compromised in the world, not able to save his own family because his compromise has rendered him morally weak in witnessing to his own children.

They saw him as part of the world, not making a stand, compromising, so when he does make a stand they do not take him seriously. Sometimes this is the reason why we feel powerless to guide our own children.

¹⁵ When morning dawned, the angels urged Lot, saying, "Up, take your wife and your two daughters who are here, or you will be swept away in the punishment of the city." ¹⁶ But he hesitated. So the men seized his hand and the hand of his wife and the hands of his two daughters, for the compassion of the Lord *was* upon him; and they brought him out, and put him

outside the city. ¹⁷ When they had brought them outside, one said, "Escape for your life! Do not look behind you, and do not stay anywhere in the valley; escape to the mountains, or you will be swept away." ¹⁸ But Lot said to them, "Oh no, my lords! ¹⁹ Now behold, your servant has found favor in your sight, and you have magnified your lovingkindness, which you have shown me by saving my life; but I cannot escape to the mountains, for the disaster will overtake me and I will die; ²⁰ now behold, this town is near *enough* to flee to, and it is small. Please, let me escape there (is it not small?) that my life may be saved." ²¹ He said to him, "Behold, I grant you this request also, not to overthrow the town of which you have spoken. ²² Hurry, escape there, for I cannot do anything until you arrive there." Therefore the name of the town was called Zoar. ²³ The sun had risen over the earth when Lot came to Zoar.

The angels are ready to destroy the cities and telling Lot, his wife and two daughters to leave but Lot appeals to them to save one of the cities called Zoar because it is small, not too wicked or too far. He did not want to travel and live in the mountains like Abraham because he did not think he would survive (he was righteous but his faith was weak).

Even at this point he is compromising, but God has mercy on him and permits it.

²⁴ Then the Lord rained on Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven, ²⁵ and He overthrew those cities, and all the valley, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and what grew on the ground. ²⁶ But his wife, from behind him, looked *back*, and she became a pillar of salt.

²⁷ Now Abraham arose early in the morning *and went* to the place where he had stood before the Lord; ²⁸ and he looked down toward Sodom and Gomorrah, and toward all the land of the valley, and he saw, and behold, the smoke of the land ascended like the smoke of a furnace.

²⁹ Thus it came about, when God destroyed the cities of the valley, that God remembered Abraham, and sent Lot out of the

midst of the overthrow, when He overthrew the cities in which Lot lived.

After their departure, the cities were destroyed by fire and brimstone that rained down upon them.

There are several things these could have been:

1. A supernaturally generated fire sent from heaven to destroy the city.
2. A divinely timed volcanic eruption that destroyed them – there is evidence of volcanic activity in the region.
3. A divinely timed earthquake that distributed hydrocarbons and sulphur into the atmosphere that may have been ignited by a lightning storm creating a devastating fire from the sky. There is also evidence of a fault line in the region.

In any case, God was able to produce any of these and the Bible records that the city was destroyed. In addition to this, Lot's wife perished as she disobeyed the angel's instructions and looked back. The term used suggests she looked back longingly to the world she was leaving behind. Perhaps she immediately turned to salt while glancing back. Perhaps she hesitated and lingered and was overtaken by the fire, smoke and ash, and eventually her remains became a pillar of salt like those that exists in the region today.

Either way, her worldliness finally got the best of her because she just could not give up the sinfulness of Sodom and her slow departure from it finally destroyed her (being too slow to let go can destroy us as well today).

Today was the day of salvation and she waited and lingered too long.

Verses 30-38: This is the final narrative describing Lot's situation. After his escape from Sodom he sees that going to the mountains is the safest idea and thus goes there with his two remaining unmarried daughters.

His wife is dead as well as most of his family, his possessions are gone as well as his home and he is now living in a cave.

God spared his life because of Abraham and his righteous soul, however, he suffered loss because he compromised with the world.

His two daughters are afraid of being alone without help or descendants so they ply him with wine (note that the use of alcohol is almost always used in a negative term) and conceive by having relations with him while he is intoxicated.

- This was not the sin that it was later in Moses' time but still they realized that Lot would not have agreed to it.
- This was less about sexual immorality and more about their lack of faith in God to provide for them.

The chapter ends describing the results of this union.

- Moab (from the father) became a great nation living in the mountainous regions, often at war with the Israelites (the Moabites).
- Ruth however was a Moabite.
- Benammi (son of my people) was also born and he became the father of the Ammonites.

Lot had great opportunities, great blessings and the Bible says he was righteous but his weakness and compromise with the world led to the loss of his home and destruction of most of his family.

LESSONS

1. Be ready

The Lord visited both Abraham and Lot and each was in a different state of readiness.

- Abraham was waiting, anticipating the coming and God blessed both him and Sarah in answer to their prayer.
- Lot was enjoying the world, trying to fit in to it and his compromising nearly cost him his life.

The Lord's coming is not only at the end of the world. The Lord can visit us with a blessing or a test at any time and we must be ready, aware that this may happen to us.

2. Nothing is too difficult for God

Sarah was passed childbearing age. Lot had lost everything. The daughters of Lot saw no future for themselves. They forgot or doubted that nothing was too hard for the Lord. We need to take the impossible things or those things that look impossible and give them up in prayer to the God for Whom nothing is too difficult.

3. Mercy and justice

We need to always keep in mind that God is a God of mercy and justice. Not just patience, understanding, and forgiveness, but judgment, punishment, and reckoning too! We do well to depend on God's mercy but not to presume on it. God's justice will judge the hypocrites, the unfaithful and the unbelievers.

4. Do not look back

Lot's wife is the perfect example of what happens to those who love the world and hate leaving it. She believed, she understood, her feet were heading towards the safety of the mountains but her heart was in Sodom. God judges us not for where our feet are, He judges us for where our hearts are. Where your heart is, that is where your treasure is and that is where your judgment will be as well.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Summarize the events of Genesis 18:1-20 and answer the following questions:
 - What were the stated reasons for God's visit with Abraham?
 - What was Sarah's reaction when she heard about delivering a child and how does this relate to her previous attempt to provide an heir for Abraham through her servant, Hagar?
 - What were the reasons Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed?
2. What is significant about Abraham's attempt to intercede for Sodom and Gomorrah?
3. What is significant about Lot sitting at the gates of Sodom?
4. Discuss the mob's reaction to the visitors.
5. Who was saved from the destruction of the city, who was not, and what is the significance of this?
6. What is indicated regarding the faith of Lot's daughters from their actions in Genesis 19:30-38?
7. How can you use this lesson to grow spiritually and help others come into a relationship with Jesus?

33.

The Source of Islam

GENESIS 20:1-21:34

In chapters 18 and 19, we saw a comparison of the type of faith that both Abraham and Lot had.

Abraham's faith, although it had ups and downs, did have a direction. You could see improvement as he progressed in his faith. He accomplished certain things in the name of God through his faith (defeat of northern kings). His faith moved him to glorify God with his work, serve others and save others through his prayers (prayer for Lot). The result of Abraham's faith was that God answered his prayers and blessed his life and considered him righteous.

Lot's faith was real but he compromised with the world. As a result, his faith was weak, he made no progress spiritually, he accomplished nothing for the Lord and he lost everything in the end.

These chapters demonstrated that our lifelong relationship of faith with God includes not only Him forgiving and being patient with our failures, it also includes faith, service, trust and progress on our part. The next chapters continue the story of Abraham's walk with God.

FAILURE – 20:1-18

After the Lord and the angels visited Abraham to tell him that Sarah would conceive and later left to destroy Sodom, Abraham leaves for a trip to the capital city of the land of the Philistines near the Egyptian border.

Perhaps the destruction of the cities near him caused economic hardship in the area and he needed to open up new trade or other business dealings there. Eventually he ends up living in this area. He was a chieftain and had to support a large household and so this may have been the nature of the trip.

In verses 1-2, we read that he and Sarah use the same lie that they had told in Egypt for the same reasons. They were afraid she would be taken and that he would be killed. She was 90 years old at this time and in order to conceive God may have rejuvenated her to a point that this might pose a danger. We see that king Abimelech (a title like Pharaoh) took her into his harem to be his wife. It could have been sexual desire or the desire to form an alliance with a powerful chieftain like Abraham.

In the ensuing verses we see God deal with Abimelech.

1. He inflicts a serious disease on his household and possibly his entire people (one where they would not be able to produce children).
2. He prevents Abimelech from having sex with Sarah and warns him he will die if he does.
3. He tells him who Abraham is and informs him that if he releases Sarah, Abraham, who is a prophet, will pray for him.

We also see what Abimelech says to Abraham.

1. He rebukes Abraham for deceiving him and jeopardizing the safety of his nation.
2. He also rebukes Sarah and tells her that the covering she needs is her husband and that this will be enough to protect her from the desire of other men (vs. 16).
3. He gives Abraham money, livestock and the freedom to live anywhere in his land. This Abraham accepts not to offend him further.

Abraham for his part explains his conduct to the king and accepts the gifts and the rebuke because of his lie.

This is the last chapter containing information about Abraham before the birth of Isaac which will begin a new period in his life.

THE CHILD OF PROMISE

Chapter 21 begins by describing the birth of Isaac. The word stresses that he was born according to God's promise. The fact that Abraham was 100 and Sarah 90 did not limit the promise. When God promises, He also enables: Sarah was able to nurse her son, and Abraham was even able to have six other sons with his wife Ketura after Sarah died.

Man's weakness cannot stop the fulfillment of God's promises. As was the custom of the time, when Isaac was weaned, Abraham made a feast for his household and neighbors.

⁹ Now Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had borne to Abraham, mocking. ¹⁰ Therefore she said to Abraham, "Drive out this maid and her son, for the son of this maid shall not be an heir with my son Isaac." ¹¹ The matter distressed Abraham greatly because of his son. ¹² But God said to Abraham, "Do not be distressed because of the lad and your maid; whatever Sarah tells you, listen to her, for through Isaac your descendants shall be named. ¹³ And of the son of the maid I will make a nation also, because he is your descendant." ¹⁴ So Abraham rose early in the morning and took bread and a skin of water and gave *them* to Hagar, putting *them* on her shoulder, and gave *her* the boy, and sent her away. And she departed and wandered about in the wilderness of Beersheba.

- Genesis 21:9-14

Note that the old jealousy springs up and once again Hagar is sent away with her child. God promises to care for the woman and child but the promise of the seed was to come through Isaac. Note that this is the first time but not the last that Abraham has to give up a child that he loves.

¹⁵ When the water in the skin was used up, she left the boy under one of the bushes. ¹⁶ Then she went and sat down opposite him, about a bowshot away, for she said, "Do not let me see the boy die." And she sat opposite him, and lifted up her voice and wept. ¹⁷ God heard the lad crying; and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven and said to her, "What is the matter with you, Hagar? Do not fear, for God has heard the voice of the lad where he is. ¹⁸ Arise, lift up the lad, and hold him by the hand, for I will make a great nation of him." ¹⁹ Then God opened her eyes and she saw a well of water; and she went and filled the skin with water and gave the lad a drink. ²⁰ God was with the lad, and he grew; and he lived in the wilderness and became an archer. ²¹ He lived in the wilderness of Paran, and his mother took a wife for him from the land of Egypt.

Hagar is put into the wilderness with only a little food and water (perhaps so that she would learn quickly to trust in God). Soon they are lost and Hagar cries out to God for help, and He provides a well and safety.

In one verse the Bible summarizes how Ishmael became a hunter and how he married an Egyptian woman selected by his Egyptian mother. In Genesis 25 we find out that he had 12 sons and became a great nation just as God had promised. Some interesting points about this section:

1. The Muslim religion traces its cultural source to Hagar and Ishmael just like the Jewish one traces its source back to Isaac and Abraham.
2. The rivalry described in this ancient text continues today as the Muslim world and Jewish nation are continually at odds and at war with each other.
3. The Muslim religion has ceremonies done today that date back to this very event, and is set forth in three categories:
 - Articles of faith (doctrinal creeds)
 - Right conduct (morality)
 - Religious duty (worship)

"*MOSLEM*" is the anglicized version of the word MUSLIM which refers to a "true believer," a follower of the religion of Islam (means *surrender*).

Under the section of religious duty for a Muslim is the pilgrimage. Once in a lifetime a Muslim or his representative must go to the holy shrine at Mecca for religious observances.

The shrine at Mecca, Saudi Arabia, is considered holy for two reasons:

- It is the place where the *KAABA* is kept. A large square building covered by a black silk cloth (four stories high). Inside is a meteorite that fell in the region during the Middle-ages and considered a sacred sign from Allah (the Muslim name for God). This black stone is kissed or touched by the pilgrims as they proceed around the building in circular fashion.
- It is also said to be near the place where Hagar was lost in the desert with Ishmael, the father of the Arab people.
- Part of the pilgrimage sees them running between two hills, shaking their shoulders seven times in imitation of Hagar, frantic at being lost in the desert.

This along with prayers, teaching, fasting and almsgiving make up their religious pilgrimage to Mecca.

4. Another interesting thing about this story is that it reveals to us another "type".

A type is a person, place, thing, or situation that prepares us for a person, place, thing or situation that God wants to reveal to us in complete truth. For example: the ark = the church.

Hagar and her actions do not signify anything for us as Christians but her relationship with Sarah is a type for another more important and ongoing relationship and that is the conflicting correlation between the principle of law and the principle of grace, and the results of each.

Paul refers to this in Galatians:

²¹ Tell me, you who want to be under law, do you not listen to the law? ²² For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by the bondwoman and one by the free woman. ²³ But the son by the bondwoman was born according to the flesh, and the son by the free woman through the promise. ²⁴ This is allegorically speaking, for these *women* are two covenants: one *proceeding* from Mount Sinai bearing children who are to be slaves; she is Hagar. ²⁵ Now this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children. ²⁶ But the Jerusalem above is free; she is our mother. ²⁷ For it is written,

"Rejoice, barren woman who does not bear;
Break forth and shout, you who are not in labor;
For more numerous are the children of the desolate
Than of the one who has a husband."

²⁸ And you brethren, like Isaac, are children of promise. ²⁹ But as at that time he who was born according to the flesh persecuted him *who was born* according to the Spirit, so it is now also. ³⁰ But what does the Scripture say?

"Cast out the bondwoman and her son,
For the son of the bondwoman shall not be an heir with the
son of the free woman."

³¹ So then, brethren, we are not children of a bondwoman, but of the free woman.

- Galatians 4:21-31

A. Hagar represents the Law, and her descendants are those who follow it (Jews and Muslims and all who try to be saved by the Law). Her descendants are born of the flesh in that they are great and numerous but not the ones through whom the promise would come. Her people try to justify themselves with the Law (study the Muslim religion and you will see how legalistic it is). Paul refers to Jews who also try to justify themselves with the Law.

Their natural earthly home is Jerusalem (even today they control the spot where the temple was) and they fight for control over it with the Jews. They began by persecuting the children of the promise and continue to

do so throughout history. They began as slaves and are still slaves of sin and ignorance to this day.

B. Sarah represents grace and her descendants are those who rely on faith in Christ to save them. Sarah's descendants began as a gracious promise fulfilled by God's power, not man's nature. Her descendants exist because God wanted His promise to be carried by her generations.

Her people are justified because they believe in God, not because they perfectly obey God's laws. (The core of the Christian faith is justification by faith, not law. This is the complete opposite of Islam).

A Christian's true home is the New Jerusalem in heaven. Earth is simply a pilgrimage. A Christian's temple is his body and God dwells within him, not in a building. Christians have been persecuted for being God's children. Christians began as free, they continue to live as totally free of condemnation and darkness: they are children of light.

Hagar and Sarah's relationship and what happened to them in their lives and descendants are a type that demonstrate the difference between the results of those who live under law and the results of those who live under grace.

Verses 22 to 34 recount an agreement made between Abimelech (the king that originally took his wife) and Abraham.

The king wants a non-aggression treaty with Abraham and Abraham agrees with the condition that he have the right to a disputed well site. Once this matter is settled, Abraham gives the king seven ewe lambs signifying the completeness of their agreement and the ownership of the well.

Abraham names the place Beersheba (well of the oath or well of the seven) and returns home in the land of the Philistines. He will live here one day but only when Isaac is grown up and Sarah is gone.

LESSONS

1. Never too old to sin

Dr. James Baird Sr. (president of Oklahoma Christian University – deceased) once told his class that as you grow older the type of sin you commit changes but sin is always a problem for the human being. Abraham was 100 years old but his habit of lying about his wife was well engrained and caused him problems even at this late date in life.

The key is to deal with sinfulness now and not think we will "grow too old" to be subject to temptation and sin, or that simple aging leads to holiness. Denying sinfulness is an effort at any age. One is never too young to start and never too old to stop sinning.

2. Mountain tops lead to valleys

People, especially young people, think that life starts low and simply gets better (an influence of evolutionary thinking). The truth is that we started perfect and then fell and now our pattern is up and down.

This is especially true in the Christian life: mountaintop experiences are usually followed by valleys of darkness. Abraham had been visited by the Lord and angels in person, had saved his nephew, had been rejuvenated to the point where his sex life was active and productive. He was on top of the world and then he lied and came crashing down.

This pattern happens in the church as well. When things are going great, momentum, growth, great enthusiasm, you can be sure that Satan is working overtime to divide the brethren or bring sin into the camp to make things come crashing down. When you are at the peak, slow down and be cautious, it is easy to fall.

3. His time, not your time

God accomplished everything for Abraham in exactly the time He said.

We need to understand that since God is in charge of everything (even how long and how much Satan can operate), He is also in charge of time. It is not only His time for religious things or prayers... everything runs on His time: the rain, the good, the evil, the beginning and the end. Our task is to cultivate an appreciation for His timetable and develop patience.

God always knows how long things will take and how long we have. He never forgets the time, He is never late, He never wastes time, He is always aware of the time you have left. We will become much less stressed if we realize that the world operates on His time, not our own.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Summarize the events of Genesis 20:1-18 and answer the following questions:
 - Why would Abraham repeat the lie he had done previously?
 - Although Abraham clearly lied, a violation of God's will, why would God enable him to gain further riches and rewards from this incident?
2. How was Isaac born and what was the significance of his birth?
3. Summarize the events leading to God's promise to Hagar from Genesis 20:9-20. Answer the following questions:
 - Discuss why Sarah would be jealous of Hagar since she was Abraham's wife and Isaac the heir.
 - Why would God allow another nation to arise that would compete against His people?
4. Discuss how the reliance of legalistic works as seen in Islam and Judaism conflict with grace.
5. How can you use this lesson to grow spiritually and help others come into a relationship with Jesus?

34.

Abraham's Test

GENESIS 22:1-23:20

In chapter 21 of Genesis we focused on the origin of two great cultures and how their beginnings provided a key to understanding future generations.

1. Hagar, Sarah's slave, first had a child with Abraham in order to try and fulfill God's promise through natural means. Her son was Ishmael and from him came the twelve tribes that eventually formed the Arab nation. From this nation also came the Muslim religion that is widespread today and continues to honor Hagar and Ishmael in their pilgrimages and rituals. Ishmael, however, was not God's choice for the promised seed and was not used to fulfill God's promise to bring a savior into the world.
2. Sarah was Abraham's wife and when she was 90, through God's grace, she gave birth to Isaac. Isaac and his descendants formed the twelve tribes from which the Jewish nation was founded. It was through this people that God's promised Messiah would come.

Ishmael and Isaac were in conflict because of this from the beginning and their descendants in the Middle East continue to be divided until this day.

We also saw how Hagar and Sarah were types that represented the relationship between those who seek to justify themselves by the Law and those who are justified by faith.

1. Hagar, a slave, was not chosen to be the one to carry the promise. Similarly, those who try to justify themselves by the Law remain slaves, do not profit from the promise, and can only call the earthly city of Jerusalem their home.
2. Sarah was free and promised a blessing. Those who are justified by faith in Jesus are free from sin, receive the blessings of the promise and can aspire to be in the New Jerusalem in heaven when Jesus comes.

These next chapters will bring us to the climax of Abraham's life and recount the death of Sarah as well as the final days of Abraham's amazing journey of faith.

TEST OF FAITH

¹ Now it came about after these things, that God tested Abraham, and said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." ² He said, "Take now your son, your only son, whom you love, Isaac, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I will tell you."

- Genesis 22:1-2

In the scheme of things there is a long period of silence between chapters 21 and 22. Perhaps twenty years or so go by as Isaac grows into young manhood. The silence is broken, however, with a chilling request. God tells Abraham to take his son and offer him as a sacrifice.

Interesting words:

1. Tempted (tested) can mean different things depending on context.

- To seduce or draw into evil. What Satan does to draw us into sin and consequently cause our deaths.
- To test or try, in order to determine the worth of something. What engineers do to demonstrate the efficiency or quality of a

product or construction. What God does to demonstrate to us or to the world the quality or strength of our faith and character.

Jesus was tested by God (His faith was examined through trials and sufferings) to demonstrate to others the quality of His character and faith. For example, the "test" in the desert with Satan.

Abraham is now being tested in order to show the quality of his faith developed during a lifelong relationship with God: To show the quality to himself (confirmation); to the nations around him (witness); and to future generations (type).

2. Love - This is the first time this word is used in the Bible.

It is significant that the first time the word **love** is used it refers not to the love between a man and woman, friend love, the love of God, but the love that a father has for his son. It is interesting to note that the first time the word love is mentioned in the New Testament, it is in regards to the love that God has for His Son (Matthew 3:17; Mark 1:11; Luke 3:22). The first time it is mentioned in the fourth gospel it refers to the love that God has for us as our Father and we as His children. This primary mention and teaching on love in the Bible demonstrates the essence of love, God's love existing in the Godhead, and God's love extended to man. Man's love for God is first and his love for other humans comes only after this.

³ So Abraham rose early in the morning and saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him and Isaac his son; and he split wood for the burnt offering, and arose and went to the place of which God had told him. ⁴ On the third day Abraham raised his eyes and saw the place from a distance. ⁵ Abraham said to his young men, "Stay here with the donkey, and I and the lad will go over there; and we will worship and return to you." ⁶ Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on Isaac his son, and he took in his hand the fire and the knife. So the two of them walked on together. ⁷ Isaac spoke to Abraham his father and said, "My father!" And he said, "Here I am, my son." And he said, "Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for the

burnt offering?" ⁸ Abraham said, "God will provide for Himself the lamb for the burnt offering, my son." So the two of them walked on together.

We see Abraham, Isaac and two servants leaving to go to Mount Moriah. Again, we see a passage that contains a wealth of "type" imagery for Christ and His sacrifice.

Abraham is promised that through his seed the savior will come, and in this scene God makes him act out, as it were, the very thing that the promise offered: salvation through the death burial and resurrection of Jesus.

1. Note that Abraham is willing to obey God's will and does not hesitate, even leaving early the next day.
2. Isaac and two slaves go along.
3. They arrive at the place on the third day. This represents the three days Jesus spent in the tomb. Isaac was already dead the moment God asked Abraham to sacrifice him and Abraham agreed. He was as good as dead for three days before they arrived at the place of sacrifice.
4. The servants are left behind and Isaac willingly goes with his father, there is no hesitation here as well. He, unknowingly, is a willing sacrifice.

Note also that Abraham says to the servants that they **both** will return. Here we see his great faith. He is fully intending to sacrifice his son. He is fully intending to return with him alive.

¹⁷ By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was offering up his only begotten *son*; ¹⁸ *it was he* to whom it was said, "In Isaac your descendants shall be called." ¹⁹ He considered that God is able to raise *people* even from the dead, from which he also received him back as a type.

- Hebrews 11:17-19

This passage describes Abraham's faith as reaching the point where his only conclusion was that God could and would resurrect his son from the dead if need be. He believed that through Isaac many generations would come, he was prepared to offer him as sacrifice, so his only conclusion was that somehow God would give him back his son from death.

Abraham crossed an important frontier of faith and that was to understand that God gave life not just through his descendants but could literally raise a person back from the dead.

5. Note that Isaac carries the wood for sacrifice on his back like Jesus carried His own cross and that Abraham carries the knife (symbol of life and death) just like the Father had the power of life and death (Jesus could not have died without His permission).

Isaac questions Abraham about the nature of the sacrifice and Abraham assures him that God will provide, which is what he will ultimately name the place where this will take place, "The Lord will Provide."

This will ultimately be the place where the temple will be built and all the sacrifices foreshadowing Christ will be offered. It is where the "Dome on the rock" is now. The Jews rejected Christ and were destroyed along with their city in 70AD. Ishmael's descendants now control that location.

⁹ Then they came to the place of which God had told him; and Abraham built the altar there and arranged the wood, and bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. ¹⁰ Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. ¹¹ But the angel of the Lord called to him from heaven and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." ¹² He said, "Do not stretch out your hand against the lad, and do nothing to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me."

¹³ Then Abraham raised his eyes and looked, and behold, behind *him* a ram caught in the thicket by his horns; and Abraham went and took the ram and offered him up for a burnt offering in the place of his son. ¹⁴ Abraham called the

name of that place The Lord Will Provide, as it is said to this day, "In the mount of the Lord it will be provided."

In this passage we have several types that project ahead several important ideas.

1. Sacrifice of Christ

The willingness of both father and son to do the will of God foreshadows the willingness of the heavenly Father and Son to offer the sacrifice of Christ.

2. Vicarious atonement

At the last moment a ram is substituted for Isaac. He was as good as dead but God put a ram in his place (something had to die because God commanded it) so the ram took the place of Isaac. The idea of substitution, one dying for another, is introduced here. Of course, a ram and not a lamb is offered because the lamb of God has yet to make an appearance.

3. Relationship between faith and works

If a person is considered right with God because he believes and trusts in Him, what place does "works" have in the equation?

²⁰ But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless? ²¹ Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar? ²² You see that faith was working with his works, and as a result of the works, faith was perfected; ²³ and the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness," and he was called the friend of God. ²⁴ You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone.
- James 2:20-24

James explains it quite clearly. A person does not produce "saving faith" through works. A person's faith naturally produces works that

demonstrate or justify his faith. I do not work to be saved, I believe to be saved and this faith produces all kinds of good works in me.

Abraham's offering of Isaac is a "type" to demonstrate the degree of work a person could do if they really believed. Which is harder to do, tell a mountain to move or to offer up your only beloved son? With true faith a person could do either and Abraham is a type to show **what faith can do, not what faith must do**. We do not have to do what Abraham did to be saved but if our faith grows to be as great as his we **could** do it if God asked.

After this experience God once again confirms His promise to bless Abraham with descendants too great to number (vs. 15-24). He had been prepared to offer his only son, in return God swears that his descendants will be like the stars or the sand on the seashore.

The end has some family history of Abraham's clan back in the land of Ur.

DEATH OF SARAH – 23:1-20

Chapter 23 describes the death of Sarah at the age of 127 which means that Isaac was 37 when she died and Abraham 137. There is also a description of Abraham buying the land where she would be buried (God promised the land would be his but as of yet he did not legally own any of it). Abraham took another wife, Keturah, and had six more sons in his remaining 38 years of life.

LESSONS

If you enter a faith relationship with God:

1. Expect testing

Abraham entered a faith relationship with God and was immediately considered righteous and thus saved. His faith, however, was continually tested. It was tested because it is through testing that faith grows, it is through maturing faith that we see God more clearly, it is through a clear vision of God that we can experience hope, joy, and peace.

God tests our faith not to destroy it or us; not to prove us hypocrites or unworthy (by testing I mean allowing us to experience trials, suffering, and even doubt).

He tests faith in order to make it grow and through growing faith He enables us to arrive at peace and joy. If you enter a faith relationship, expect testing. Do not be angry, afraid, or discouraged. Realize God is working with you.

2. Expect quality

Do not consider it good luck or a fluke that you are growing in your ability to serve the Lord, resist sin and love others. The whole purpose of salvation is to change us from sinners to saints.

Rejoice when you see yourself drawn upwards in what you think and do. This is supposed to happen because of your faith. If it is not happening, it may mean that your faith is dead and if so, cannot save you. Expect quality works from a living faith.

3. Expect God to provide

Abraham's faith was summed up in his answer to Isaac when he asked where the sacrifice was coming from. He said, "The Lord will provide." That is what "Moriah" means in Hebrew. That is what they named the place where Isaac was offered.

At one time or another, every Christian goes to their own Mount Moriah in the form of various tests: family, emotion, sin, money, illness, relationships, etc. God will provide at your Mount Moriah, wherever and whenever you come to it.

God provides for the flowers, animals, even unbelievers have what they need. For His own children God will surely provide. Sometimes the greatest test of our faith is to trust that when the time comes, God will provide what we need.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Summarize the events of Abraham's test from Genesis 22 and answer the following questions:
 - How does God refer to Isaac when He addresses Abraham in Genesis 22:2, and what is significant about this?
 - How was Abraham's love for Isaac like God's love for us?
 - How does the testing of Abraham and the testing of Job compare?
2. Explain how the faith Abraham shows by obeying God is the type of faith that God seeks from us.
3. What are some reasons for testing as seen in scripture?
4. List the various symbolic events in this test of Abraham and explain how they help us understand God's will.
5. How can you use this lesson to grow spiritually and help others come into a relationship with Jesus?

35.

Types in Genesis

GENESIS 24:1-67

Chapters 22 and 23 tell the story of Abraham's climactic meeting with God where he is prepared to offer his son in sacrifice. I said that this episode had three main types that described important features of the Christian faith that was to come:

1. **The sacrifice of Christ** - Isaac's willingness to be sacrificed to obey God's will typifies Jesus' and the Father's willingness to do this.
2. **Vicarious atonement** - The concept of an innocent dying for another is seen when the ram is substituted for Isaac. This prefigures Jesus, the innocent, dying for guilty and condemned man.
3. **Faith and works relationship** - Abraham was considered righteous because he believed but his belief in God naturally led him to works of righteousness, including the sacrificing of his son. The natural outgrowth of one's faith is good works.

Remember also that Abraham's offer of Isaac is not a type for what faith demands but rather what great faith is capable of doing. Just like the natural outgrowth of an apple seed is an apple tree. If you plant the seed and no tree grows then you can assume that the seed is defective, because it has no growth.

If one says he is a believer, calls himself a Christian but there are no good works, no righteousness in his life then we can assume the seed (faith) is dead because it is supposed to produce something if it is alive.

The subsequent end with the death of Sarah and some historical information about Abraham remarrying and having six other sons. With Sarah's death it becomes important to Abraham to establish Isaac in his own home and see the next generation begin. The next chapters tell this story and offer us more types that are fulfilled in the New Testament.

GENESIS 24 – SEARCH FOR A BRIDE

Genesis 24 is the longest chapter in Genesis. It tells the story of Abraham's arrangement to secure a bride for his son Isaac. Isaac was 40 but still trusted his father's judgment in finding him a partner. This was an important choice because through this woman the seed of promise was to continue into the next generation.

¹ Now Abraham was old, advanced in age; and the Lord had blessed Abraham in every way. ² Abraham said to his servant, the oldest of his household, who had charge of all that he owned, "Please place your hand under my thigh, ³ and I will make you swear by the Lord, the God of heaven and the God of earth, that you shall not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I live, ⁴ but you will go to my country and to my relatives, and take a wife for my son Isaac."

- Genesis 24:1-4

The hand under the thigh (some commentators say under the genitals) was in connection with circumcision and related to God's oath represented by circumcision. It was the most solemn of oaths. The promise is that the servant (steward) would not take a wife from the pagans. Even though an alliance with a local chieftain would be profitable and easier.

Abraham knew that his brother had children and grandchildren and from these he wanted to choose a wife for his son. He does not send Isaac for a number of possible reasons:

- He did not want him to leave Canaan as he had previously done and gotten into trouble each time.

- He did not want Isaac to return through the country where he had been originally marked for sacrifice. It would not fit the "type." Christ died once and did not revisit Golgotha after the resurrection.
- Perhaps he did not want Isaac to become too attached to family and not return to Canaan.

⁵ The servant said to him, "Suppose the woman is not willing to follow me to this land; should I take your son back to the land from where you came?" ⁶ Then Abraham said to him, "Beware that you do not take my son back there!" ⁷ The Lord, the God of heaven, who took me from my father's house and from the land of my birth, and who spoke to me and who swore to me, saying, "To your descendants I will give this land," He will send His angel before you, and you will take a wife for my son from there. ⁸ But if the woman is not willing to follow you, then you will be free from this my oath; only do not take my son back there." ⁹ So the servant placed his hand under the thigh of Abraham his master, and swore to him concerning this matter.

The servant is unsure of his mission (it is much harder to find a wife when Isaac is not present) and from a small selection. Abraham reassures him that God will lead and bless his mission and if he follows the instructions and fails, he will not be held to the oath.

¹⁰ Then the servant took ten camels from the camels of his master, and set out with a variety of good things of his master's in his hand; and he arose and went to Mesopotamia, to the city of Nahor. ¹¹ He made the camels kneel down outside the city by the well of water at evening time, the time when women go out to draw water. ¹² He said, "O Lord, the God of my master Abraham, please grant me success today, and show lovingkindness to my master Abraham. ¹³ Behold, I am standing by the spring, and the daughters of the men of the city are coming out to draw water; ¹⁴ now may it be that the girl to whom I say, 'Please let down your jar so that I may

drink,' and who answers, 'Drink, and I will water your camels also'—*may she be the one* whom You have appointed for Your servant Isaac; and by this I will know that You have shown lovingkindness to my master."

A great caravan is formed and travels to the place where Nahor lives. Once arrived the servant makes an interesting prayer to God. He knew the custom of the young girls drawing water and the usual courtesy of any of them offering him a drink if he asked. What he was searching for was a special kind of person, in a word, a person who would go a "second mile." To water ten thirsty camels was a lot of work and demeaning as well. His prayer was that God would send one who would do it without asking.

This was not impossible, it was specific and within God's will. It also was used as a way of finding God's will **where no other indicators existed**.

¹⁵ Before he had finished speaking, behold, Rebekah who was born to Bethuel the son of Milcah, the wife of Abraham's brother Nahor, came out with her jar on her shoulder. ¹⁶ The girl was very beautiful, a virgin, and no man had had relations with her; and she went down to the spring and filled her jar and came up. ¹⁷ Then the servant ran to meet her, and said, "Please let me drink a little water from your jar." ¹⁸ She said, "Drink, my lord"; and she quickly lowered her jar to her hand, and gave him a drink. ¹⁹ Now when she had finished giving him a drink, she said, "I will draw also for your camels until they have finished drinking." ²⁰ So she quickly emptied her jar into the trough, and ran back to the well to draw, and she drew for all his camels. ²¹ Meanwhile, the man was gazing at her in silence, to know whether the Lord had made his journey successful or not.

²² When the camels had finished drinking, the man took a gold ring weighing a half-shekel and two bracelets for her wrists weighing ten shekels in gold, ²³ and said, "Whose daughter are you? Please tell me, is there room for us to lodge in your father's house?" ²⁴ She said to him, "I am the daughter of Bethuel, the son of Milcah, whom she bore to Nahor." ²⁵ Again she said to him, "We have plenty of both straw and feed, and

room to lodge in." ²⁶ Then the man bowed low and worshiped the Lord. ²⁷ He said, "Blessed be the Lord, the God of my master Abraham, who has not forsaken His lovingkindness and His truth toward my master; as for me, the Lord has guided me in the way to the house of my master's brothers."

The next section tells how Rebekah was first to get water and offer to care for the camels. The servant then finds out that she is directly related to Abraham being Isaac's second cousin. He immediately worships the Lord for having so quickly answered his prayer and answered it so perfectly. He gives the girl expensive gifts and enquires if he can stay with her family and she assures him that he can.

²⁸ Then the girl ran and told her mother's household about these things. ²⁹ Now Rebekah had a brother whose name was Laban; and Laban ran outside to the man at the spring.

³⁰ When he saw the ring and the bracelets on his sister's wrists, and when he heard the words of Rebekah his sister, saying, "This is what the man said to me," he went to the man; and behold, he was standing by the camels at the spring.

³¹ And he said, "Come in, blessed of the Lord! Why do you stand outside since I have prepared the house, and a place for the camels?" ³² So the man entered the house. Then Laban unloaded the camels, and he gave straw and feed to the camels, and water to wash his feet and the feet of the men who were with him. ³³ But when *food* was set before him to eat, he said, "I will not eat until I have told my business." And he said, "Speak on."

We see Rebekah announce the arrival of the servant to her family and they, led by Laban, her brother, went to greet the servant and welcome him into their home.

The custom of the time was to eat first and then discuss any business matters. The servant was very eager to find out if Rebekah would return with him so he refused to eat until they had concluded their business. Of course, during this period of time and in this culture contracting a

marriage was like a business dealing with careful negotiations and contracts between the families.

In the long discourse that follows (verses 34-49), the servant recounts the life and situation of Abraham and his oath to come and find a bride for Isaac among his people. He tells them of his prayer and the wonderful way that God answered him through Rebekah's action.

He finishes by putting the question to them about whether or not Rebekah will accept the proposal and return with him to be Isaac's wife. There is another "type" here and that is the type for the work of the Holy Spirit in going out and seeking the bride of Christ, which is the church.

- He is sent out by the Father on behalf of the Son.
- The Son is not present, but the Holy Spirit is (through the witness of the Apostles, through the Word, through the call of the gospel).
- The Holy Spirit declares the wealth of the Father and the offer of becoming the bride of the Son with all the blessings that this will entail.
- The offer requires a decision, one that will have a lifelong effect on the individual.

⁵⁰ In his birth and relationship with Abraham and his bride, Isaac is used very much as a type for Christ. Then Laban and Bethuel replied, "The matter comes from the Lord; *so* we cannot speak to you bad or good. ⁵¹ Here is Rebekah before you, take *her* and go, and let her be the wife of your master's son, as the Lord has spoken."

⁵² When Abraham's servant heard their words, he bowed himself to the ground before the Lord. ⁵³ The servant brought out articles of silver and articles of gold, and garments, and gave them to Rebekah; he also gave precious things to her brother and to her mother. ⁵⁴ Then he and the men who were with him ate and drank and spent the night. When they arose in the morning, he said, "Send me away to my master." ⁵⁵ But her brother and her mother said, "Let the girl stay with us *a*

few days, say ten; afterward she may go." ⁵⁶ He said to them, "Do not delay me, since the Lord has prospered my way. Send me away that I may go to my master." ⁵⁷ And they said, "We will call the girl and consult her wishes." ⁵⁸ Then they called Rebekah and said to her, "Will you go with this man?" And she said, "I will go." ⁵⁹ Thus they sent away their sister Rebekah and her nurse with Abraham's servant and his men. ⁶⁰ They blessed Rebekah and said to her, "May you, our sister, Become thousands of ten thousands, And may your descendants possess The gate of those who hate them." ⁶¹ Then Rebekah arose with her maids, and they mounted the camels and followed the man. So the servant took Rebekah and departed.

Here we see the family responding to the idea that if this has been the Lord's will, then they are eager to do it. Normally there would have been preparations and delay but the servant insists on departing immediately and after Rebekah's positive response, they make ready to go the next day.

Again, we see the continuation of the type of the Holy Spirit and His work in forming and bringing the bride of Christ, the church, to God.

- There is a need to make an immediate decision – today is the day of salvation.
- Once the decision is made there is no going back, a new life will begin. (Rebekah would be far from her family and would not likely see them again.)
- Her response was enthusiastic and emphatic. She was ready and willing to leave right away.
 - This was God's leading for her life and she was eager to do His will.

- When we know that the gospel is God's way of calling us, we should be eager to follow.

Her family pronounces a blessing on her which reflects God's promise to Abraham, and she leaves with the servant.

⁶² Now Isaac had come from going to Beer-lahai-roi; for he was living in the Negev. ⁶³ Isaac went out to meditate in the field toward evening; and he lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, camels were coming. ⁶⁴ Rebekah lifted up her eyes, and when she saw Isaac she dismounted from the camel. ⁶⁵ She said to the servant, "Who is that man walking in the field to meet us?" And the servant said, "He is my master." Then she took her veil and covered herself. ⁶⁶ The servant told Isaac all the things that he had done. ⁶⁷ Then Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent, and he took Rebekah, and she became his wife, and he loved her; thus Isaac was comforted after his mother's death.

No mention is made of the journey back, only of the meeting which could be out of a movie scene. The servant probably informed her about her husband to be and introduces them. She is placed in Sarah's tent left empty after her death and then into his own after the wedding.

These people are types for Christ and the church, and their union foreshadows the union of Christ and the church at His return:

ISAAC / CHRIST

- Promised long before His coming – Luke 1:70
- Appeared at the appointed time – Galatians 4:4
- Conceived miraculously – Luke 1:35
- Assigned a name before birth – Matthew 1:21
- Offered in sacrifice by his father - Genesis 22:9
- Obedient unto death – Philippians 2:8

- Brought back from the dead – Ephesians 1:19-23
- Head of a great nation – Ephesians 1:19-23

REBEKAH / CHURCH

- Her marriage planned long before – Ephesians 1:3
- Accomplishes God's purpose – Ephesians 1:23
- Shares the glory of the Son – John 17:22
- Learned of the Son through a messenger (Holy Spirit) – Acts 2
- Left all to go with the Son – I Peter 1:8
- Accompanied to the Son by the servant – I Peter 3:8-9
- Lives with the Son in union – Ephesians 5:26

LESSONS

1. Be specific

Even though the servant knew he was generally doing God's will, when he was unsure he was specific in his prayer. He did not test God, he simply wanted a clear indication of what God's will was. If there are no instructions from the Word, or good precedents or experience to help form our decisions, we have a good example here to encourage us to be specific when asking God to direct us.

2. Character counts

Note that Abraham wanted a wife for his son that was a believer and of his own family. God provided this and much more:

- She was eager to serve.
- She was fervent in her faith, she was eager to do God's will.

- She was brave, ready to leave her home and go to foreign land and marry a man she had never seen.

We all want our children to marry well but we need to teach them from a young age what it is that **they** are looking for. They will not always listen but we at least need to inform them of what to look for and what to avoid in a potential marriage partner.

3. It is all about Christ

From beginning to end, the Bible is about Jesus Christ. It was written to introduce us to Him, help us know Him, lead us to Him, help us live with Him, and remain faithful to Him. Every book is about just Him. Whether it is history, theology or type, the central theme of the Bible is Christ and when we have this understanding, we can truly understand the Bible.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Summarize the oath between Abraham and his messenger and discuss the connection between the "hand under the thigh" and God's requirement for circumcision.
2. How can this activity also be a test of faith for those involved? What does this teach us?
3. What can we learn about following God's will from Rebekah's family?
4. How is the messenger's actions a "type" of the Holy Spirit and the church?
5. How are Isaac and Rebekah seen as a "type" for Christ and the Church?
6. How can you use this lesson to grow spiritually and help others come into a relationship with Jesus?

36.

The Life of Esau and Jacob

GENESIS 25:1-26:35

Chapter 35 told the story of Isaac and Rebekah and the arrangement of their wedding. A significant factor about this chapter was that it contained the types for Christ and the church in Isaac and Rebekah.

Another type in the story was that of the Holy Spirit and the church seen in the actions of Abraham's messenger and how he found and brought the bride to Isaac, much like the Holy Spirit seeks the church (through the gospel) and prepares her to be brought to Christ on the last day. In the end, Isaac and Rebekah are married and the chapter closes out with this scene.

The next chapters in Genesis will lead us through the final days of Abraham and the beginning of the fulfillment of God's promise as Isaac and Rebekah begin having children.

THE DEATH OF ABRAHAM – 25:1-10

Abraham was 140 when Isaac married Rebekah and moved southward to Lahai-roi. He is now left alone and so he remarries. His new wife's name is Keturah (covered with incense). The Bible records that they had six sons in the next 35 years. The descendants of these eventually merged with other tribes to form the Arab nation.

⁵ Now Abraham gave all that he had to Isaac; ⁶ but to the sons of his concubines, Abraham gave gifts while he was still living, and sent them away from his son Isaac eastward, to the land

of the east.

⁷ These are all the years of Abraham's life that he lived, one hundred and seventy-five years. ⁸ Abraham breathed his last and died in a ripe old age, an old man and satisfied *with life*; and he was gathered to his people. ⁹ Then his sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah, in the field of Ephron the son of Zohar the Hittite, facing Mamre, ¹⁰ the field which Abraham purchased from the sons of Heth; there Abraham was buried with Sarah his wife.

Note that although they are his children and he provides for each of them, the bulk of his wealth and the promise goes to Isaac.

Abraham dies at 175 and is buried by his two sons who have since reconciled. "Gathered to his people" suggests that he went to be with other believers that came before him. It cannot mean the Jewish race because he is the first; it cannot mean his family because he has left them and disassociated himself from them. He is buried with Sarah in the burial spot that he purchased.

TRANSITION – VS. 11-18

The next six verses list the generations of Ishmael and his death at 137. Isaac's record ends here and another writer begins to record the history of the family and God's dealings with it. We probably begin reading Jacob's record from this point on. Isaac writes Abraham's record, Jacob writes Isaac's, etc.

ESAU AND JACOB – VS. 19-34

¹⁹ Now these are *the records of the generations of Isaac*, Abraham's son: Abraham became the father of Isaac; ²⁰ and Isaac was forty years old when he took Rebekah, the daughter of Bethuel the Aramean of Paddan-aram, the sister of Laban the Aramean, to be his wife. ²¹ Isaac prayed to the Lord on behalf of his wife, because she was barren; and the Lord answered him and Rebekah his wife conceived. ²² But the

children struggled together within her; and she said, "If it is so, why then am I *this way*?" So she went to inquire of the Lord. ²³ The Lord said to her,
"Two nations are in your womb;
And two peoples will be separated from your body;
And one people shall be stronger than the other;
And the older shall serve the younger."

Again the mother of the promised seed needs prayer to conceive (God wants us to pray even for things promised). There is more fetal activity than normal and God reveals that it is because each child represents a nation that will struggle with the other.

The custom was that the older son receive a larger portion, be head of the home when the father died and be first to receive the inheritance.

God chooses the younger son to receive the promise in this case, which is nothing new. Seth, Isaac, Jacob, Judah and David were younger sons who were chosen by God because God knew their character and abilities in advance and offered them the opportunity to serve. They could have refused (Saul refused; Judas refused).

²⁴ When her days to be delivered were fulfilled, behold, there were twins in her womb. ²⁵ Now the first came forth red, all over like a hairy garment; and they named him Esau.
²⁶ Afterward his brother came forth with his hand holding on to Esau's heel, so his name was called Jacob; and Isaac was sixty years old when she gave birth to them.

The twins are born and are named in accordance with their appearance:

- Esau means hairy because of his robust and strong appearance.
- Jacob means heel catcher, supplanter, which refers to his tenaciousness and toughness (never give up type).

Isaac is 60 years old (20 years after his marriage) when they are finally born.

THE BIRTHRIGHT – VS. 27-34

The following is a brief but telling description of the development of these two brothers:

ESAU

- A cunning hunter
- No virtue here because there was plenty of food and meat, no game overpopulation or wild beasts threatening.
- He was a sportsman (and later we find out, a fornicator).
- Uninterested in spiritual things, the family business, leadership.
- Isaac favored him in the same way a father may favor a son who is a general goof-off but is a good athlete.

JACOB

- Plain does not mean dull or uninteresting, it means serious-minded, responsible, mature.
- He lived at home, took care of the family business, was a believer in God and the promise (he wanted it so he believed in it).
- His mother, a spiritual woman, recognized this in him and knew that God had said that Jacob would inherit the promise so she favored and encouraged him.

²⁹ When Jacob had cooked stew, Esau came in from the field and he was famished; ³⁰ and Esau said to Jacob, "Please let me have a swallow of that red stuff there, for I am famished." Therefore his name was called Edom. ³¹ But Jacob said, "First sell me your birthright." ³² Esau said, "Behold, I am about to die; so of what *use* then is the birthright to me?" ³³ And Jacob said, "First swear to me"; so he swore to him, and sold his birthright to Jacob. ³⁴ Then Jacob gave Esau bread and lentil

stew; and he ate and drank, and rose and went on his way.
Thus Esau despised his birthright.

Esau returns from his hunting trip hungry and smells the stew cooking. He could have taken a moment to cook and prepare something but when Jacob offered food in exchange for his birthright he agreed.

The birthright was the blessing on the older son that included a double portion of wealth, leadership in the family, responsibility as spiritual head as well. Esau was not interested in leadership, responsibilities or spiritual things, only the double portion which he figured was so far off as to not be of any use so he agreed to trade the blessing for food. Note that the Bible does not condemn Jacob, it condemns Esau: he despised his birthright. Jacob wanted it so he was willing to deal for it. Esau did not care so he gave it away.

God does not condemn Jacob because his fault was a lack of faith in allowing God to work out His promise. Esau is condemned because he had no faith (better weak or impatient faith than no faith at all).

Jacob wanted the right thing for the right reasons, but he went about it in the wrong way and as a result deepened the estrangement that already existed between himself and his brother, and with time between himself and his father.

ISAAC VS. THE PHILISTINES – CHAPTER 26

¹ Now there was a famine in the land, besides the previous famine that had occurred in the days of Abraham. So Isaac went to Gerar, to Abimelech king of the Philistines. ² The Lord appeared to him and said, "Do not go down to Egypt; stay in the land of which I shall tell you. ³ Sojourn in this land and I will be with you and bless you, for to you and to your descendants I will give all these lands, and I will establish the oath which I swore to your father Abraham. ⁴ I will multiply your descendants as the stars of heaven, and will give your descendants all these lands; and by your descendants all the nations of the earth shall be blessed; ⁵ because Abraham

obeyed Me and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes and My laws."

- Genesis 26:1-5

Isaac lived in the south and as a famine covered the land, he moved closer to the coast where the Philistines lived with the intention of going to Egypt. God's appearance to him suggests several things:

1. A warning that he is not to leave the land of Canaan (he did not leave to find a wife, and should not leave now).
2. A word of encouragement in the repeating of the original promise made to Abraham. Isaac had lived an abundant life and this suffering was new to him, he needed reminding of God's promise (the circumstances had changed but God's promise remained the same). Perhaps Isaac's attitude towards Esau was an indication of his weak faith and this episode was a way of bolstering it.
3. A word of rebuke. God refers to Abraham's faith and obedience and not Isaac's as a basis for what he is doing. When Abraham was alive, God referred to his own obedience and faith not that of his predecessors.

Verses 6-11 recount an interesting episode where Isaac lies to protect himself. He uses the same deception as Abraham by telling the Philistine king that Rebekah is his sister. The king finds out and rebukes him for endangering his people in this way but offers him protection.

¹² Now Isaac sowed in that land and reaped in the same year a hundredfold. And the Lord blessed him, ¹³ and the man became rich, and continued to grow richer until he became very wealthy; ¹⁴ for he had possessions of flocks and herds and a great household, so that the Philistines envied him.

¹⁵ Now all the wells which his father's servants had dug in the days of Abraham his father, the Philistines stopped up by filling them with earth. ¹⁶ Then Abimelech said to Isaac, "Go away from us, for you are too powerful for us."

What is more interesting is that even after this lapse, God blesses Isaac, not for his weakness but because he said that He would take care of him and despite Isaac's fear and failure, God cared for him anyway by blessing him in an abundant manner, to the point where Isaac grew more powerful than the king who protected him. Perhaps the point being that when the Lord protects you, you do not have to lie and cheat in order to obtain the king's protection.

In verses 17-22, Isaac was asked to leave the Philistine country because he was so powerful. In this passage you see him slowly edging away from Philistine land.

He would move and dig a well but the locals would claim it. Instead of fighting, he would move further away. When a second well was also claimed he moved until he could dig a well that no one would claim. This well he named "*the well of ample room*".

23 Then he went up from there to Beersheba. 24 The Lord appeared to him the same night and said, "I am the God of your father Abraham; Do not fear, for I am with you. I will bless you, and multiply your descendants, For the sake of My servant Abraham."

25 So he built an altar there and called upon the name of the Lord, and pitched his tent there; and there Isaac's servants dug a well.

This is the only time Isaac is seen building an altar and calling upon God.

His comfortable life interrupted by famine; moral failure before Abimelech; the necessity of having to move over and over again drives Isaac to his knees in prayer and he calls upon God for help. His prayer is answered as God appears and confirms His blessing and protection of Isaac.

In verses 26-33, Abimelech, the king of the Philistines comes to Isaac to make a peace treaty with him.

- Isaac is rich and growing more powerful.
- Recent frictions may create resentments that he wants settled.
- He has treated them well and wants this to be the basis for their treaty.

They agree and make a covenant of peace together at the same spot where Abraham and a former Philistine king had done so a hundred years earlier.

³⁴ When Esau was forty years old he married Judith the daughter of Beerli the Hittite, and Basemath the daughter of Elon the Hittite; ³⁵ and they brought grief to Isaac and Rebekah.

This verse serves as a bridge to get back to the family story which we will continue in chapter 27.

LESSONS

1. Be careful what you give away

Esau did not recognize the value of what he had and foolishly traded it away for a bowl of stew. Young people sometimes give away their opportunities for a moment of sexual or mental pleasure through drugs (we are always warning them about that). However, we need to be careful that we not give away some of our advantages too. Adults have a natural respect and influence quotient but sometimes trade that away because what we say is inconsistent with what we do. Christians sometimes give away their peace of mind with God because they are curious or nostalgic about worldliness. Salvation is free but if you throw it away you cannot buy it back.

2. You never suffer in vain

When trouble and suffering comes, we may not deserve it, understand it or even be well equipped to deal with it. However, it is never in vain. God had a purpose for Isaac's trials and He has a purpose for all of our trials

as well. The suffering or trial may not make sense in itself, but God can make sense of it; in His hands suffering will take on purpose and meaning as well as a blessing, in many cases.

3. A promise is a promise

God made a promise to both Abraham and Isaac and He continued to honor it. God's promises are not based on our performance or ability, they are guaranteed by God's power and goodness. Both father and son failed in the same way. God continued to keep His promise to them, nevertheless. The key is to never stop trusting that God will provide, and that trust will become evident in your life as you grow in faith and obedience.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How was the writer of Genesis able to describe Abraham's life as, "an old man and satisfied with life" or "full of years" (Genesis 25:7) and how can we achieve that in our lives?
2. Which phase or event in Abraham's life stands out most to you as one that you can identify with or learn the most from?
3. Discuss how Isaac praying for his wife to conceive demonstrates faith, and how this differs from Sarah's plan to resolve her inability to conceive.
4. Why would God choose Jacob to inherit the birthright of Isaac rather than the first-born son, Esau?
5. Review Genesis 26 and answer the following questions:
 - Why did Isaac enter into an agreement with the King of the Philistines?
 - What was the result of Isaac living in Gerar?
 - What was the ultimate blessing provided by God to Isaac and why?
 - What can we learn from this?
6. How can you use this lesson to grow spiritually and help others come into a relationship with Jesus?

37.

The Battle for the Blessing

GENESIS 27:1-46

We finished with the death of Abraham and the close-up of Isaac's life now being transcribed by Jacob. Early on we have seen Isaac's own personal tests of faith and the birth of his twins Jacob and Esau. The bulk of the chapter compared the character and activity of these two brothers and finished with Esau giving away his birthright to Jacob.

God had promised that the birthright would go to Jacob. His small faith, however, moved him to manipulate his brother rather than wait on God to fulfill His promise. This shows that small faith moves you to certain actions (which you regret) in the same way that great faith moves you to actions that cause you to rejoice.

This manipulation will cause problems later on and the next chapters deal with the continued striving within this family over who possessed the blessing.

THE DECEPTION – 27:1-25

Now in chapter 26:34-35 it says that Esau, to the sorrow of his parents, married two pagan women from the area. This sets up the condition and strife within the family as we enter into the story of chapter 27.

¹ Now it came about, when Isaac was old and his eyes were too dim to see, that he called his older son Esau and said to him, "My son." And he said to him, "Here I am." ² Isaac said, "Behold now, I am old *and* I do not know the day of my death. ³ Now then, please take your gear, your quiver and your bow, and go out to the field and hunt game for me; ⁴ and prepare a savory dish for me such as I love, and bring it to me that I may eat, so that my soul may bless you before I die." ⁵ Rebekah was listening while Isaac spoke to his son Esau. So when Esau went to the field to hunt for game to bring *home*,

Isaac is getting older (but not near death as he thought because he died at 180 and was about 135 at the time). It was the custom to pronounce the blessing at the time of a feast and so since Isaac was to bless Esau, it seemed fitting that Esau should provide the feast himself.

Some interesting notes about this passage concerning the blessing:

1. It was done in secret and Rebekah only overheard the plan. It seems that giving Esau the blessing was not a popular decision.
2. Despite Esau's unholy behavior (marrying two pagan women), God's promise to give the blessing to Jacob and Esau's oath to give the blessing to Jacob, Isaac was determined to give the blessing to Esau anyways.
3. Isaac's physical blindness mirrored his spiritual blindness when it came to favoring this particular son.

⁶ Rebekah said to her son Jacob, "Behold, I heard your father speak to your brother Esau, saying, ⁷ 'Bring me *some* game and prepare a savory dish for me, that I may eat, and bless you in the presence of the Lord before my death.'⁸ Now therefore, my son, listen to me as I command you. ⁹ Go now to the flock and bring me two choice young goats from there, that I may prepare them *as* a savory dish for your father, such as he loves. ¹⁰ Then you shall bring *it* to your father, that he may eat, so that he may bless you before his death." ¹¹ Jacob answered

his mother Rebekah, "Behold, Esau my brother is a hairy man and I am a smooth man. ¹² Perhaps my father will feel me, then I will be as a deceiver in his sight, and I will bring upon myself a curse and not a blessing." ¹³ But his mother said to him, "Your curse be on me, my son; only obey my voice, and go, get *them* for me." ¹⁴ So he went and got *them*, and brought *them* to his mother; and his mother made savory food such as his father loved. ¹⁵ Then Rebekah took the best garments of Esau her elder son, which were with her in the house, and put them on Jacob her younger son. ¹⁶ And she put the skins of the young goats on his hands and on the smooth part of his neck. ¹⁷ She also gave the savory food and the bread, which she had made, to her son Jacob.

In the next passage we see Rebekah, Isaac's wife, devise a plan where she would cook the food (it seems Isaac's love of game food was not that great since he could not tell the difference between game and goat – love is truly blind). In addition to this, she plans to have Jacob serve it in disguise.

Again, neither she nor Jacob were rebuked for this. The plan was deceitful but the purpose was right. We know that God does not support deceit and the troubles that they suffered for this show it. However, God allows us to work our way through with **our** methods instead of waiting patiently on Him, if we insist on it.

Jacob is hesitant but Rebekah convinces him that her food and a disguise of Esau's clothing (with its particular smell) as well as animal skins sewn to his collar and wrists would be able to fool Isaac.

- Rebekah is a forceful and decisive woman. She makes the plan, convinces her son, she is even ready to take the blame if it all goes wrong.
- This could be for the love of her son but her character so far suggests that she is a strong-willed believer and a "take charge" kind of woman.
- Her strength is her zeal for God and doing His will; her weakness is impatience and self-will.

¹⁸ Then he came to his father and said, "My father." And he said, "Here I am. Who are you, my son?" ¹⁹ Jacob said to his father, "I am Esau your firstborn; I have done as you told me. Get up, please, sit and eat of my game, that you may bless me." ²⁰ Isaac said to his son, "How is it that you have *it* so quickly, my son?" And he said, "Because the Lord your God caused *it* to happen to me." ²¹ Then Isaac said to Jacob, "Please come close, that I may feel you, my son, whether you are really my son Esau or not." ²² So Jacob came close to Isaac his father, and he felt him and said, "The voice is the voice of Jacob, but the hands are the hands of Esau." ²³ He did not recognize him, because his hands were hairy like his brother Esau's hands; so he blessed him. ²⁴ And he said, "Are you really my son Esau?" And he said, "I am." ²⁵ So he said, "Bring *it* to me, and I will eat of my son's game, that I may bless you." And he brought *it* to him, and he ate; he also brought him wine and he drank. ²⁶ Then his father Isaac said to him, "Please come close and kiss me, my son." ²⁷ So he came close and kissed him; and when he smelled the smell of his garments, he blessed him and said,
"See, the smell of my son
Is like the smell of a field which the Lord has blessed;
²⁸ Now may God give you of the dew of heaven,
And of the fatness of the earth,
And an abundance of grain and new wine;
²⁹ May peoples serve you,
And nations bow down to you;
Be master of your brothers,
And may your mother's sons bow down to you.
Cursed be those who curse you,
And blessed be those who bless you."

One question arises from this passage, "Why did God honor this blessing when it was received through deception and lies?" It was certainly not because God justifies or does not care about lies. Also, it was not because the mean justifies the end. God honored this blessing because God honors our will, for good or evil.

God promised the blessing to Jacob but his mother and he went ahead of God (like Abraham and Sarah) in order to work it out, and God permitted them to do it. However, He also permitted them to suffer the consequences. The sins were definitely on Esau and Isaac. One for being an ungodly man and the other for refusing to do God's will. God would have handled them and the blessing in his own way and time. Jacob and Rebekah would not have had to sin.

This brings up another ethical problem, the one of the lesser of two evils. Sometimes we are in a situation where the options are bad and worse. For example, a mother will die if she does not abort the child. People will be murdered if the one hiding them does not lie. Ten people with a disease and only five vaccines on hand.

The Bible also shows examples of people who had to break one of God's commands in order to obey another. For example, Hebrew midwives disobeyed civil authority (the king's edict to kill male children) in order to save Jewish babies. Rahab, the harlot, lied to the army in order to protect the Jewish spies.

Some could argue that Jacob and Rebekah lied and practiced deceit in order to preserve the promise and save it from going into the hands of an ungodly man thus bringing condemnation and destruction on himself and his father. Lying to save it was not as bad as what could have happened.

In the end, whether one suffers in waiting for God to intervene or one intervenes by choosing the lesser of two evils, one thing is sure. These situations bring about the necessity for God's grace to save us either way: for those who wait, they wait for God's grace to save them; for those who make bad choices, they need God's grace to cover their sins in order to save them.

- A lie, even if done to save, is a sin and requires God's grace to cover.
- A woman lets the child go in order to save her life and needs God's grace to forgive her and comfort her in this impossible decision.

- Jacob and Rebekah needed God's grace to forgive their flawed plan even if it did have good intentions, and because they were in a faith relationship with God, they received this grace.

The point is, if you are in a faith relationship with God, you receive grace for sins, bad choices, decisions on the lesser of two evils. If you are not, you receive no grace and die in your sins.

In the final verses of this section, Isaac gets to the heart of the matter by giving away the blessing. First he blesses him for physical and worldly blessings. Then the blessing of God regarding superiority, protection and the fact he would be blessed by others and be a blessing to them.

Despite the rebellion of Isaac, the worldliness of Esau (he knew the blessing was promised to Jacob and that he had sold it to him himself yet he was still ready to accept it), and the scheming of Rebekah and Jacob, God's will was accomplished.

³⁰ Now it came about, as soon as Isaac had finished blessing Jacob, and Jacob had hardly gone out from the presence of Isaac his father, that Esau his brother came in from his hunting. ³¹ Then he also made savory food, and brought it to his father; and he said to his father, "Let my father arise and eat of his son's game, that you may bless me." ³² Isaac his father said to him, "Who are you?" And he said, "I am your son, your firstborn, Esau." ³³ Then Isaac trembled violently, and said, "Who was he then that hunted game and brought *it* to me, so that I ate of all *of it* before you came, and blessed him? Yes, and he shall be blessed."

Isaac and Esau learn of Jacob and Rebekah's deceit. It is interesting that Isaac confirms that Jacob shall be blessed. He gives in to God at last when, in trembling reality, he sees that God has judged his rebellion through Jacob's deceit.

Have you ever done something wrong, knew it was wrong, but kept doing it anyways? And then something happens to you to prove that you should not have been doing this all along, and you are caught.

This is what is happening to Isaac:

- He loved Esau, idolized his virility and allowed it to blind him and go against what he knew was right.
- God showed him, through this event, what he knew all along but would not give in to: Jacob was God's choice.
- His trembling was a mixture of anger at his family but also fear that God had, by this, judged his rebellious heart.

He is quick to see this and becomes firm that Jacob has and will keep the blessing.

³⁴ When Esau heard the words of his father, he cried out with an exceedingly great and bitter cry, and said to his father, "Bless me, *even* me also, O my father!" ³⁵ And he said, "Your brother came deceitfully and has taken away your blessing."
³⁶ Then he said, "Is he not rightly named Jacob, for he has supplanted me these two times? He took away my birthright, and behold, now he has taken away my blessing." And he said, "Have you not reserved a blessing for me?" ³⁷ But Isaac replied to Esau, "Behold, I have made him your master, and all his relatives I have given to him as servants; and with grain and new wine I have sustained him. Now as for you then, what can I do, my son?" ³⁸ Esau said to his father, "Do you have only one blessing, my father? Bless me, *even* me also, O my father." So Esau lifted his voice and wept. ³⁹ Then Isaac his father answered and said to him, "Behold, away from the fertility of the earth shall be your dwelling, And away from the dew of heaven from above.
⁴⁰ "By your sword you shall live, And your brother you shall serve; But it shall come about when you become restless, That you will break his yoke from your neck."

Esau is sad because the political advantage of the blessing has slipped away from him. The elder will serve the younger means that even their

descendants will have this relationship. He begs for a blessing (since Jacob took it by deception, he reasons that it does not count). Isaac refuses and instead gives a prophecy concerning Esau: that he will dwell in rocky places, be at war and have a brief time of respite. Esau's descendants, the Edomites, bear this out. They lived in the hill country, were constantly at war with Israel and were independent until David's reign. After David they were in subjection and ultimately disappeared.

⁴¹ So Esau bore a grudge against Jacob because of the blessing with which his father had blessed him; and Esau said to himself, "The days of mourning for my father are near; then I will kill my brother Jacob." ⁴² Now when the words of her elder son Esau were reported to Rebekah, she sent and called her younger son Jacob, and said to him, "Behold your brother Esau is consoling himself concerning you *by planning* to kill you." ⁴³ Now therefore, my son, obey my voice, and arise, flee to Haran, to my brother Laban! ⁴⁴ Stay with him a few days, until your brother's fury subsides, ⁴⁵ until your brother's anger against you subsides and he forgets what you did to him. Then I will send and get you from there. Why should I be bereaved of you both in one day?"

⁴⁶ Rebekah said to Isaac, "I am tired of living because of the daughters of Heth; if Jacob takes a wife from the daughters of Heth, like these, from the daughters of the land, what good will my life be to me?"

The deceit bears fruit as Esau's sadness turns to murderous rage. Rebekah decides to send Jacob to her relatives to live while Esau calms down, and also to prevent him from marrying pagans as Esau did. Again, she is decisive and a planner.

Of course, she is hoping that Esau's rage will subside (and we find out that it eventually does) but it will be twenty years before Jacob returns and this will be the last time that Rebekah will see him. She will be dead before he comes back.

LESSONS

1. We need God's grace for everything

We think we need God's grace only when we do something wrong but without His grace we could not exist.

- Grace brings us into being.
- Grace provides for all of our needs.
- Grace permits us to continue to exist despite the fact that we are imperfect in every way.

From morning till night and all through the night we need God's grace to sustain us when we do wrong and when we do right but do it imperfectly.

2. Blind love is not true love

Esau is a good example of those children who are talented, charismatic; raised in Christian homes with love and stability; but love the world, reject or ignore all the good influence that is around them. Parents sometime make Isaac's mistake of ignoring all the signs of fallen faith and try to love them into heaven. Nowhere in the record does Isaac rebuke, admonish or discipline Esau. On the contrary, he encourages him in his ways. Blind love is not love. True love takes the good and the bad for what it is and deals with both in the appropriate way.

3. There is always a price to pay

Isaac lost both sons and the confidence of his wife for his rebellion. Rebekah lost sight of her Jacob and the peace in her home. Esau lost the blessing, the respect of his parents as well as the fellowship of his brother. Jacob lost his family. Even if no one knows, even if you think it will result in good, there is always a price to pay for sin.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Summarize Genesis 27:1-46 how Rebekah and Jacob deceived Isaac and answer the following questions:
 - Why would God not punish Rebekah and Jacob for their deception?
 - How does God's choice of when and how to punish relate to Matthew 24:36 regarding the return of our Lord?
2. Read Genesis 27:34-47 and answer the following questions:
 - What was the immediate outcome once Esau realized Jacob had cheated him of his birthright?
 - What was Esau's plan once he realizes his mother and brother's deceit?
 - How does Esau's plan for revenge on his brother relate to Jesus' teachings on hate and murder (Matthew 5:21), I John 3:15, and Ephesians 4:26-27?
3. How does this event point to God's grace?
4. How can you use this lesson to grow spiritually and help others come into a relationship with Jesus?

38.

Jacob's Family

GENESIS 28:1-30:24

In the previous chapter we reviewed the story of Isaac's unintentional blessing of Jacob and the results of this.

- Esau is ready to kill his brother.
- Jacob is sent away for protection and with the hope of finding a wife among Rebekah's relatives.
- Isaac is rebuked for his rebellion.

Now we get a close-up of Jacob and the twenty years of separation from his family.

The Blessing

¹ So Isaac called Jacob and blessed him and charged him, and said to him, "You shall not take a wife from the daughters of Canaan. ² Arise, go to Paddan-aram, to the house of Bethuel your mother's father; and from there take to yourself a wife from the daughters of Laban your mother's brother. ³ May God Almighty bless you and make you fruitful and multiply you, that you may become a company of peoples. ⁴ May He also give you the blessing of Abraham, to you and to your descendants with you, that you may possess the land of your sojournings, which God gave to Abraham." ⁵ Then Isaac sent Jacob away, and he went to Paddan-aram to Laban, son of

Bethuel the Aramean, the brother of Rebekah, the mother of Jacob and Esau.

- Genesis 28:1-5

Once Isaac realizes that he has been thwarting God with his stubbornness, he re-issues the blessing as well as an instruction.

Before, Jacob received the blessing by deceit but now the blessing is given openly, freely and using the terms much more in line with the terms originally used in giving Abraham the blessing.

Note also that Isaac instructs him to take a wife from among his mother's family (hoping to find a believing spouse).

Esau's Reaction

⁶ Now Esau saw that Isaac had blessed Jacob and sent him away to Paddan-aram to take to himself a wife from there, *and that* when he blessed him he charged him, saying, "You shall not take a wife from the daughters of Canaan," ⁷ and that Jacob had obeyed his father and his mother and had gone to Paddan-aram. ⁸ So Esau saw that the daughters of Canaan displeased his father Isaac; ⁹ and Esau went to Ishmael, and married, besides the wives that he had, Mahalath the daughter of Ishmael, Abraham's son, the sister of Nebaioth.

We even see some repentance on Esau's part. Seeing that his pagan wives were a concern to his parents and that the blessing was now officially and openly Jacob's, he goes and marries someone more suitable and closer in kinship to Isaac: Ishmael's daughter (his uncle's daughter/niece). Of course, this is too little and too late but it indicates that Esau was also subdued by some of the events that took place.

JACOB'S LADDER

¹⁰ Then Jacob departed from Beersheba and went toward Haran. ¹¹ He came to a certain place and spent the night there,

because the sun had set; and he took one of the stones of the place and put it under his head, and lay down in that place.

¹² He had a dream, and behold, a ladder was set on the earth with its top reaching to heaven; and behold, the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. ¹³ And behold, the Lord stood above it and said, "I am the Lord, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie, I will give it to you and to your descendants. ¹⁴ Your descendants will also be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south; and in you and in your descendants shall all the families of the earth be blessed. ¹⁵ Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you."

Jacob is alone, not a man of the fields, never been away from home and running from his brother. This is the first of eight appearances by God to Jacob. He had appeared to Abraham, Isaac and now to Jacob. He does so in a dream and reconfirms the blessings pronounced upon him by his father.

There would be no doubt in Jacob's mind that despite his poor method, he did have and would keep the blessing.

The imagery of the dream with a ladder (only time this word is used) with angels going up and down suggests and/or teaches several things:

1. There is movement between the spiritual world and the physical world.
2. Angels' tasks are to move between heaven and the world to minister to those who are part of the promise. We learn more specific details later (II Kings 6:17; Daniel 9:21-23; Mark 1:13; Luke 22:43, etc.) but this is an early indication of this phenomenon.
3. The ladder or link between the two is Christ

And He said to him, Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see the heavens opened and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.
- John 1:51

The imagery here does not explain this to Jacob except in a very oblique way but later on in the Bible Jesus uses it to refer to Himself.

The angels minister to the saved by the power of and on behalf of Christ who is the link between heaven and earth.

Jacob awakens from his dream (verses 16-22) and does several things:

1. He builds a pillar to commemorate the spot where God met and appeared to him in this dream. He offers a sacrifice of oil on it. Later he will return and actually build an altar (Genesis 35:3,7).
2. He names the place Bethel which means the *house of God*.
3. He makes a vow to give God a tithe of all he has as a mark of appreciation for God being his God and providing for him.

JACOB AND LABAN – CHAPTER 29

In verses 1-6, Jacob is about seventy-five years old at this time and in chapter 29 we see him arrive at his destination. In the similar way as the servant who found his mother, Jacob comes across a well where he meets Rachel, a shepherdess, who is the daughter of his uncle Laban.

Upon seeing Rachel (vs. 7-12) he is overcome by emotion in being reunited with his family. He kisses her (not romantic but family greeting) and rejoices at finding her. She runs to tell her family.

¹³ So when Laban heard the news of Jacob his sister's son, he ran to meet him, and embraced him and kissed him and brought him to his house. Then he related to Laban all these things. ¹⁴ Laban said to him, "Surely you are my bone and my flesh." And he stayed with him a month.

¹⁵ Then Laban said to Jacob, "Because you are my relative, should you therefore serve me for nothing? Tell me, what shall your wages be?" ¹⁶ Now Laban had two daughters; the name of the older was Leah, and the name of the younger was Rachel. ¹⁷ And Leah's eyes were weak, but Rachel was beautiful of form and face. ¹⁸ Now Jacob loved Rachel, so he said, "I will serve you seven years for your younger daughter Rachel." ¹⁹ Laban said, "It is better that I give her to you than to give her to another man; stay with me."

- Genesis 29:13-19

Jacob is reunited with his uncle and stays with him. Laban offers him a job and Jacob offers seven years of free service in return for Rachel in marriage. This was a good deal for Laban, and Jacob was without means so this was a way of showing his true love and the value he placed on Rachel.

The Bible says Rachel was beautiful of face and form and Leah was "tender eyed" (weak eyes, homely, tender in her nature).

²⁰ So Jacob served seven years for Rachel and they seemed to him but a few days because of his love for her.

²¹ Then Jacob said to Laban, "Give *me* my wife, for my time is completed, that I may go in to her." ²² Laban gathered all the men of the place and made a feast. ²³ Now in the evening he took his daughter Leah, and brought her to him; and *Jacob* went in to her. ²⁴ Laban also gave his maid Zilpah to his daughter Leah as a maid. ²⁵ So it came about in the morning that, behold, it was Leah! And he said to Laban, "What is this you have done to me? Was it not for Rachel that I served with you? Why then have you deceived me?" ²⁶ But Laban said, "It is not the practice in our place to marry off the younger before the firstborn. ²⁷ Complete the week of this one, and we will give you the other also for the service which you shall serve with me for another seven years." ²⁸ Jacob did so and completed her week, and he gave him his daughter Rachel as his wife. ²⁹ Laban also gave his maid Bilhah to his daughter Rachel as her maid. ³⁰ So *Jacob* went in to Rachel also, and

indeed he loved Rachel more than Leah, and he served with Laban for another seven years.

It is interesting to note that Laban does not make a move to fulfill his part of the bargain until Jacob insists on it (that should have been a warning). Jacob is deceived in the same way as his father was.

- Blinded by love
- Dress and perfume to disguise the real person (not mentioned but obvious)
- Contact in darkness after a feast (Isaac also feasted then gave the blessing).

He confronts Laban who justifies his actions based on custom. A new agreement is made where Leah's week is fulfilled (to confirm the marriage) and then Jacob can have Rachel. He agrees to this and a week later consummates his relationship with Rachel and stays on to work for Laban another seven years. Some interesting notes:

- He loved Rachel **more** than Leah but he did have love for Leah.
- Jacob could have rejected Leah but instead he forgave and honored her. This speaks highly of his character.
- There is no mention of it but there must have been great suffering on Rachel's part because she was deceived as well.

JACOB'S SONS

The next verses describe the birth of Jacob's twelve sons by Leah, Rachel and their maids. This was not adultery because both women were his legal wives and any children he had with the maids were all legally his according to the custom of the time.

This was polygamy and not according to God's original plan given in the garden. However, in the time before Moses, God did permit it. Esau was condemned for marrying pagan women, not for having two wives. Jacob

was never condemned or rebuked for his many wives. However, the unnaturalness of it becomes evident when we see the problems it causes.

³¹ Now the Lord saw that Leah was unloved, and He opened her womb, but Rachel was barren. ³² Leah conceived and bore a son and named him Reuben, for she said, "Because the Lord has seen my affliction; surely now my husband will love me." ³³ Then she conceived again and bore a son and said, "Because the Lord has heard that I am unloved, He has therefore given me this *son* also." So she named him Simeon. ³⁴ She conceived again and bore a son and said, "Now this time my husband will become attached to me, because I have borne him three sons." Therefore he was named Levi. ³⁵ And she conceived again and bore a son and said, "This time I will praise the Lord." Therefore she named him Judah. Then she stopped bearing.

Leah is hated (in the sense she is not the favorite) and so God enables her to conceive in rapid succession. Her fertility raises her worth and attraction to her husband. She names her children accordingly:

- **Reuben** – behold a son
- **Simeon** – hearing
- **Levi** – attachment
- **Judah** – praise

We see in her attitude and the names that she gives her sons that she loves Jacob, desires him to be near her and that she is a spiritual woman who has faith and trusts in the Lord.

¹ Now when Rachel saw that she bore Jacob no children, she became jealous of her sister; and she said to Jacob, "Give me children, or else I die." ² Then Jacob's anger burned against Rachel, and he said, "Am I in the place of God, who has withheld from you the fruit of the womb?" ³ She said, "Here is my maid Bilhah, go in to her that she may bear on my knees, that through her I too may have children." ⁴ So she gave him

her maid Bilhah as a wife, and Jacob went in to her. ⁵ Bilhah conceived and bore Jacob a son. ⁶ Then Rachel said, "God has vindicated me, and has indeed heard my voice and has given me a son." Therefore she named him Dan. ⁷ Rachel's maid Bilhah conceived again and bore Jacob a second son. ⁸ So Rachel said, "With mighty wrestlings I have wrestled with my sister, *and* I have indeed prevailed." And she named him Naphtali.

- Genesis 30:1-8

Rachel is jealous. She had to wait for her sister in order to marry and now her sister is having four children with her original husband! Their argument leads to Jacob's statement that God is the one who is holding back her womb and not himself. She tests this by giving her maid (like Sarah had done) in order to see if God will answer her prayers for a child.

- **Dan** – justice (she is justified)
- **Naphtali** – wrestlings (signifying her struggle with Leah)

⁹ When Leah saw that she had stopped bearing, she took her maid Zilpah and gave her to Jacob as a wife. ¹⁰ Leah's maid Zilpah bore Jacob a son. ¹¹ Then Leah said, "How fortunate!" So she named him Gad. ¹² Leah's maid Zilpah bore Jacob a second son. ¹³ Then Leah said, "Happy am I! For women will call me happy." So she named him Asher.

Leah also uses this method to continue providing children for her husband. Perhaps the need to produce children overrode Rachel's jealousy concerning Jacob's relationship with these other women. In any case it was a way of producing many children very quickly and this was a clear advantage in this day and time.

Zilpah has two sons and Leah names them Gad (fortunate) and Asher (happy) which reflect her feelings about these children and this situation.

¹⁴ Now in the days of wheat harvest Reuben went and found mandrakes in the field, and brought them to his mother Leah.

Then Rachel said to Leah, "Please give me some of your son's mandrakes." ¹⁵ But she said to her, "Is it a small matter for you to take my husband? And would you take my son's mandrakes also?" So Rachel said, "Therefore he may lie with you tonight in return for your son's mandrakes." ¹⁶ When Jacob came in from the field in the evening, then Leah went out to meet him and said, "You must come in to me, for I have surely hired you with my son's mandrakes." So he lay with her that night. ¹⁷ God gave heed to Leah, and she conceived and bore Jacob a fifth son. ¹⁸ Then Leah said, "God has given me my wages because I gave my maid to my husband." So she named him Issachar. ¹⁹ Leah conceived again and bore a sixth son to Jacob. ²⁰ Then Leah said, "God has endowed me with a good gift; now my husband will dwell with me, because I have borne him six sons." So she named him Zebulun. ²¹ Afterward she bore a daughter and named her Dinah.

The mandrake is a small orange colored berry-like fruit. It was prized in the ancient world as an aphrodisiac. It was also seen as a fertility inducer and some parts of it (the roots) were used as a narcotic. (Called the love apple/May apple).

Reuben, Leah's son, finds some and Rachel makes a deal with Leah to send Jacob to her in exchange for these.

- Jacob was spending more time with Rachel and her maids than with Leah.
- Rachel wanted the mandrakes to try to get pregnant.
- She was willing to send Jacob to Leah now and try to get pregnant later.

Jacob agrees, Leah gets pregnant from their union and names the child Issachar which means reward. This turns Jacob's attention again to her and she conceives again and another son, Zebulun (dwelling) is born now that Jacob is with her. Soon after a daughter is also born and named Dinah (judgment).

Many years later (vs. 22-24), Rachel finally gives birth to a son and calls him Joseph (means to take away and to add). Her reproach for barrenness was finally taken away and her new son added joy to her life. This ends the account of the birth of Jacob's family at this time. One more son and other daughters to be born.

| LEAH | ZILPAH | RACHEL | BILHAH |
|----------|--------|-----------|----------|
| Reuben | Gad | Joseph | Dan |
| Simeon | Asher | Benjamin* | Naphtali |
| Levi | | | |
| Judah | | | |
| Issachar | | | |
| Zebulun | | | |
| Dinah | | | |

LESSONS

1. God is interested in your problem

- Jacob was alone and unsure, God appeared to him personally to reconfirm the blessing.
- Leah was unloved and lonely, she had children.
- Rachel was feeling cheated and ashamed, she gave birth to Joseph.

God is interested in your problem, and no problem is too difficult, too insignificant or too human for Him to be interested, involved and invested in.

2. Giving is part of thanksgiving

Jacob's reaction to God's appearance was not only praise and prayer but he dedicated himself to giving one tenth of what he had to God as a sign of his gratitude. There was no law that said he had to do this. It was simply the natural reaction of a happy and grateful heart. There is no real thanks without giving, that is why the "offering" is part of the worship. What we

put in the collection plate at worship signifies how sincere our praise really is.

3. Roll with the punches

In Jacob's story we have ordinary people facing extraordinary situations caused by their own sins or the sins of others.

- Jacob and Rachel were robbed of their wedding night.
- Leah endured a humiliating marriage.
- Jacob worked an additional seven years for his father-in-law.
- Theirs was a strange blended family in which they all lived in.

They did not allow a single bad or inconvenient thing to totally destroy them. They all had faith in God (note that each of them competed and were in conflict with the other but kept calling on God as individuals for help). God's people roll with the punches knowing that the objective is not to win every round but to finish the fight. Through Christ we can all roll with the punches when the going is rough and still finish as victors in the end.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What is significant about Isaac redoing the blessing upon Jacob?
2. What was significant about Esau's reaction to Isaac blessing Jacob?
3. What is represented by the ladder in Jacob's dream (Genesis 28:12; John 1:51) and what is the significance to us?
4. Summarize the events in Genesis 28 that speak to the covenant of God with Jacob and how we can apply this to our lives.
5. Read the covenant God made with Jacob from Genesis 28:13-15 and answer the following questions:
 - What is significant about God not putting conditions on Jacob regarding the covenant and why is this significant to us?
 - How is God's promise to Jacob in verse 15 and I John 1:5-10 related to our relationship with God today?
6. Summarize the events between Jacob and Laban from Genesis 29.
7. How can you use this lesson to grow spiritually and help others come into a relationship with Jesus?

39.

Jacob Leaves Laban

GENESIS 30:25-31:55

Our last chapter covered the period in Jacob's life where he fathered the twelve sons who would become the leaders of the twelve tribes of Israel (actually one son is born later). This he did with his two wives Rachel and Leah and their two maids Zilpah and Billah. In this section we will follow Jacob as he begins to separate himself from his father-in-law, Laban, and begin to journey home.

JACOB AND LABAN'S ARRANGEMENT – 30:24-43

We need to understand that Jacob was in Laban's home because he had run away. In addition to this, Laban had taken advantage of him because of his weak position. Jacob has now worked for Laban for twenty years (Genesis 31:38) and Jacob himself says that in this time he has prospered Laban by his hard work. It is time to leave, his obligation is over, his family is established and the time to return to his land and people are at hand.

²⁵ Now it came about when Rachel had borne Joseph, that Jacob said to Laban, "Send me away, that I may go to my own place and to my own country. ²⁶ Give *me* my wives and my children for whom I have served you, and let me depart; for you yourself know my service which I have rendered you."

²⁷ But Laban said to him, "If now it pleases you, *stay with me*; I have divined that the Lord has blessed me on your account."

²⁸ He continued, "Name me your wages, and I will give it."

- Genesis 30:25-28

Laban acknowledges that Jacob was a profitable worker and that the Lord was with him. For this reason he does not want to lose him so he tries to make a deal, "name your price." Of course, Jacob had done this before with Rachel and he had been cheated.

²⁹ But he said to him, "You yourself know how I have served you and how your cattle have fared with me. ³⁰ For you had little before I came and it has increased to a multitude, and the Lord has blessed you wherever I turned. But now, when shall I provide for my own household also?" ³¹ So he said, "What shall I give you?" And Jacob said, "You shall not give me anything. If you will do this *one* thing for me, I will again pasture *and* keep your flock: ³² let me pass through your entire flock today, removing from there every speckled and spotted sheep and every black one among the lambs and the spotted and speckled among the goats; and *such* shall be my wages. ³³ So my honesty will answer for me later, when you come concerning my wages. Every one that is not speckled and spotted among the goats and black among the lambs, *if found* with me, will be considered stolen." ³⁴ Laban said, "Good, let it be according to your word."

Jacob explains to Laban that the reason his meager flocks had prospered was because the Lord had blessed his work. Jacob was about to prove this in the way he proposed an arrangement to Laban:

1. Laban's herds were predominately a single color

- White for the sheep
- Black for the goats
- Brown for the cattle

2. Jacob proposed that as his pay he would not take any of the animals.

What he would take would be the spotted or speckled animals that would be born to the solid-colored animals in the future.

3. He even proposed to section off the existing spotted and speckled animals so they would not breed with the solid-colored animals.

This was the perfect deal for Laban: no existing animals to give away and only a minority of future animals since he had little to do with the increase, up until this moment anyways.

³⁵ So he removed on that day the striped and spotted male goats and all the speckled and spotted female goats, every one with white in it, and all the black ones among the sheep, and gave them into the care of his sons. ³⁶ And he put a *distance of three days' journey* between himself and Jacob, and Jacob fed the rest of Laban's flocks.

Laban did not trust Jacob (because he himself was untrustworthy) and so he separated the flocks and put 3 days between the spotted and solid-colored animals, just to make sure.

³⁷ Then Jacob took fresh rods of poplar and almond and plane trees, and peeled white stripes in them, exposing the white which *was* in the rods. ³⁸ He set the rods which he had peeled in front of the flocks in the gutters, *even* in the watering troughs, where the flocks came to drink; and they mated when they came to drink. ³⁹ So the flocks mated by the rods, and the flocks brought forth striped, speckled, and spotted. ⁴⁰ Jacob separated the lambs, and made the flocks face toward the striped and all the black in the flock of Laban; and he put his own herds apart, and did not put them with Laban's flock. ⁴¹ Moreover, whenever the stronger of the flock were mating, Jacob would place the rods in the sight of the flock in the gutters, so that they might mate by the rods; ⁴² but when the flock was feeble, he did not put *them* in; so the feebler were Laban's and the stronger Jacob's. ⁴³ So the man became exceedingly prosperous, and had large flocks and female and male servants and camels and donkeys.

This describes the methods used by Jacob to increase his own flocks despite the handicap of working with solid-colored animals.

Scholars do not agree with each other on the significance of this material and the ancient methods described here for animal husbandry, but basically Jacob did two things:

1. He increased the rate at which the animals mated. The Bible said he put something in their water and had them look at stripped wood when they drank. We do not know why, we only know the effect: it produced animals in heat. The idea is that statistically, the odds of producing spotted animals from solid was small so Jacob increased the number of animals produced in total in order to increase the number of spotted produced (out of 100 only 2, out of 1000 – 20).
2. When the animals were born he encouraged only the stronger ones to mate thereby increasing the odds of greater herds and greater numbers of spotted animals.

Some have said that this was unethical, but all Jacob was doing was increasing the rate at which the entire herd and flock was producing so that his own portion would grow faster as well. What was out of his control was the actual number of spotted animals produced from this accelerated breeding program.

In the end, the stronger animals were made to breed (using his methods) and the weaker ones were not. The result was that the stronger animals produced spotted (whether they were solid or not) and Jacob's herds and flocks prospered.

In the end his herds allowed him to purchase other animals, goods and slaves, and as a result, he became independently wealthy.

Jacob had worked hard and put his knowledge about raising animals in to practice, but God provided an increase that was against the odds that Jacob was working with.

It is like this with us as well. When we work hard and do our best with what we have, and do it in faith – God can increase us against the odds.

JACOB'S DEPARTURE – CHAPTER 31

¹ Now Jacob heard the words of Laban's sons, saying, "Jacob has taken away all that was our father's, and from what belonged to our father he has made all this wealth." ² Jacob saw the attitude of Laban, and behold, it was not *friendly* toward him as formerly. ³ Then the Lord said to Jacob, "Return to the land of your fathers and to your relatives, and I will be with you."

- Genesis 31:1-3

By this time Laban's sons, who were seeing their inheritance begin to shrink, began to speak to their father against Jacob. Jacob is told in a dream by God to return home and promises him that He will protect him.

In verses 4-16, Jacob appeals to his wives to leave with him. He tells them how Laban has cheated him and gone back on his word. He describes how God revealed to him the fact that he would multiply his holdings at the expense of Laban's because of His original promises and because of Laban's dishonesty.

Both Rachel and Leah loved Jacob and they realized how badly Laban had treated him and themselves. Instead of using the money produced by Jacob's free service to build up their dowries for their children's future, Laban had used it to build up his own wealth.

They see his dishonesty and readily agree to go with Jacob to his own home.

¹⁷ Then Jacob arose and put his children and his wives upon camels; ¹⁸ and he drove away all his livestock and all his property which he had gathered, his acquired livestock which he had gathered in Paddan-aram, to go to the land of Canaan to his father Isaac. ¹⁹ When Laban had gone to shear his flock, then Rachel stole the household idols that were her father's. ²⁰ And Jacob deceived Laban the Aramean by not telling him that he was fleeing. ²¹ So he fled with all that he had; and he

arose and crossed the *Euphrates* River, and set his face toward the hill country of Gilead.

They depart in haste and in secret because Jacob realized that Laban would not let him go. It seems that Jacob left the way he arrived, on the run.

Rachel takes the family idols with her (in secret). Recent archaeological discoveries suggest that these "TERAPHIMS" or images used in divination were also associated with the inheritance and property rights of the owners. It could be that Rachel wanted some legitimate confirmation that the property they were taking was legally theirs by right of inheritance.

Vs. 22-24, Laban finds out and pursues Jacob and just before overtaking him has a dream where God tells him not to harm Jacob or speak to him in a threatening way. God was fulfilling His promise to care for Jacob, even in ways that Jacob could not think of.

Vs. 25-30, the next day Laban reaches Jacob and rebukes him for not giving him a chance to make a proper farewell for his daughters and grandchildren. He also reveals that the reason he does not harm them is because of God's warning (which is the truth). He finally asks for the whereabouts of his idols.

³¹ Then Jacob replied to Laban, "Because I was afraid, for I thought that you would take your daughters from me by force.

³² The one with whom you find your gods shall not live; in the presence of our kinsmen point out what is yours among my belongings and take *it* for yourself." For Jacob did not know that Rachel had stolen them.

³³ So Laban went into Jacob's tent and into Leah's tent and into the tent of the two maids, but he did not find *them*. Then he went out of Leah's tent and entered Rachel's tent. ³⁴ Now Rachel had taken the household idols and put them in the camel's saddle, and she sat on them. And Laban felt through all the tent but did not find *them*. ³⁵ She said to her father, "Let not my lord be angry that I cannot rise before you, for the

manner of women is upon me." So he searched but did not find the household idols.

Jacob explains why he left secretly (he did not trust Laban). He also offers to hand over anyone or anything that did not belong to him.

Rachel hides the statue by sitting on the box that it is in and claiming she is unable to rise because she is on her "period". It is unusual that this deception is allowed to stand, and because of it Jacob is spared. Again, it may be the question of the lesser of two evils.

- Rachel is guilty of the lie and will be judged by God.
- The lie is revealed and Jacob is killed or stripped of his property and sons, and Rachel is still judged by God.

The final section (vs. 36-42) describes the heated exchange between Jacob and Laban. Jacob rebukes Laban for his treatment of them which included:

- His unwarranted pursuit as if Jacob was some kind of thief.
- His unfairness in dealing with him in the past.
- Jacob served him honestly, never taking any animals, always replacing lost or destroyed animals from his own flocks, losing sleep and going hungry and thirsty in the open in order to do a good job. If it was not for the fact that God protected and blessed Jacob, Laban would have cheated him out of everything.

⁴³ Then Laban replied to Jacob, "The daughters are my daughters, and the children are my children, and the flocks are my flocks, and all that you see is mine. But what can I do this day to these my daughters or to their children whom they have borne? ⁴⁴ So now come, let us make a covenant, you and I, and let it be a witness between you and me." ⁴⁵ Then Jacob took a stone and set it up *as* a pillar. ⁴⁶ Jacob said to his kinsmen, "Gather stones." So they took stones and made a heap, and they ate there by the heap. ⁴⁷ Now Laban called it

Jegar-sahadutha, but Jacob called it Galeed. ⁴⁸ Laban said, "This heap is a witness between you and me this day." Therefore it was named Galeed, ⁴⁹ and Mizpah, for he said, "May the Lord watch between you and me when we are absent one from the other. ⁵⁰ If you mistreat my daughters, or if you take wives besides my daughters, *although* no man is with us, see, God is witness between you and me." ⁵¹ Laban said to Jacob, "Behold this heap and behold the pillar which I have set between you and me. ⁵² This heap is a witness, and the pillar is a witness, that I will not pass by this heap to you for harm, and you will not pass by this heap and this pillar to me, for harm. ⁵³ The God of Abraham and the God of Nahor, the God of their father, judge between us." So Jacob swore by the fear of his father Isaac. ⁵⁴ Then Jacob offered a sacrifice on the mountain, and called his kinsmen to the meal; and they ate the meal and spent the night on the mountain. ⁵⁵ Early in the morning Laban arose, and kissed his sons and his daughters and blessed them. Then Laban departed and returned to his place.

Laban makes a weak defense (that the daughters and cattle were all **originally** his) and so he can legitimately lay claim to all that they have produced. He also makes a hypocritical covenant: a pillar that will be a witness that Jacob will not cross over to harm him; a witness that God will watch that Jacob will not take other wives or hurt his daughters.

This was hypocritical because he was the one intent on harming Jacob; he was the one who forced Jacob to have two wives (he only wanted Rachel); he was the one who would have been forced to execute Rachel had he found the idol.

But Jacob agrees to the covenant rather than continue exposing his hypocrisy any further. In the end Laban leaves after kissing his children goodbye and the Bible never mentions him again.

LESSONS

1. Put your whole life in God's hands

One of the things that Jacob learned in his 20 years with Laban was to trust God with his whole life. He had no resources. He was on the run and could not go home. His host had power over him and was dishonest and manipulative. In the face of this, Jacob was forced to entrust his entire life, money, marriage and return home to God. In the end, he even trusted God to provide for the increase of his herd, and God rewarded his wholehearted faith with great abundance. We need to trust God with our careers, with our vacations, with our health, with our hopes, with our spiritual lives: with every part of our existence.

2. Do not let sin sneak into the camp

Rachel snuck the idol into the tent and nearly destroyed the entire camp. We need to be careful that we not allow ourselves or partners or children or whoever to bring sin into our camps (homes/lives) through books, ideas, movies, pictures, relationships, etc. that are against God, that glorify evil or are sexually impure. Many times a sinful idol in our homes will threaten our stability and prevent us from receiving a blessing – we need to clean out sinful things on a regular basis.

3. Some people just don't get it

Laban observed Jacob for twenty years. He saw his goodness and faith. He learned of his God. He observed his good work and honest behavior. He benefitted from the blessings that God gave because of Jacob. In the end, however, Laban chose to maintain his pride, hypocrisy, greed and superstition rather than believe the clear witness of God's presence through Jacob in his life. Jacob finally left and did not try to correct his theology. He simply allowed Laban to remain in his ignorance. Some people do not “get it” and once we have preached and given them a faithful witness, we have to move on with our lives.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Summarize Genesis 30:24-43 and answer the following questions:
 - Why was Jacob a part of Laban's household?
 - How was Jacob blessed while a part of Laban's household?
 - What practical lesson can we learn about Jacob's work in service to Laban as it applies to our service for the Lord?
2. Summarize the events of Genesis 31 and answer the following questions:
 - Why does Jacob want to leave Laban if he's been successful as a part of his household?
 - What was Laban's reaction to Jacob's departure and how was he thwarted in his attempt?
 - If you wish to share, how has God used events in your life to bring about your faithful service to Him?
3. How can you use this lesson to grow spiritually and help others come into a relationship with Jesus?

40.

Jacob and Esau - Round 2

GENESIS 32:1-33:20

I described the episode in Jacob's life where he was leaving his father-in-law's home and returning to his own. He had arrived at Laban's home while on the run from his brother Esau who had threatened to kill him.

Laban had manipulated and cheated him for twenty years. Now he was escaping this situation with his wives and children to return to an uncertain situation at home.

He faced Laban who had been warned by God not to harm him, and confronted him about the past. They made a treaty of peace and Laban returned home without harming Jacob.

Now, Jacob would face his greatest enemy, his brother Esau, as he returned home to the Promised Land. He returns because God **told** him to go back, not out of nostalgia or homesickness. To go back was to risk death.

GOD'S PROTECTION REVEALED

¹ Now as Jacob went on his way, the angels of God met him.

² Jacob said when he saw them, "This is God's camp." So he named that place Mahanaim.

- Genesis 32:1-2

Jacob is alone and rather helpless with his small group of women and children. His faith is demonstrated in his obedience in coming home. It

was the Promised Land, his inheritance, but what good would it be if they were all killed?

God opens the eyes of his heart to see two angels (the name means "two hosts") that are there to protect him. He draws new courage for the journey once he sees, literally, who is going with him.

Notice how this new courage and confidence makes him act, not with bravado or pride, but with humility and meekness (those who are strong can afford to be meek).

JACOB PREPARES TO MEET ESAU – VS. 3-23

³ Then Jacob sent messengers before him to his brother Esau in the land of Seir, the^l country of Edom. ⁴ He also commanded them saying, "Thus you shall say to my lord Esau: 'Thus says your servant Jacob, "I have sojourned with Laban, and stayed until now; ⁵ I have oxen and donkeys *and* flocks and male and female servants; and I have sent to tell my lord, that I may find favor in your sight.'"

⁶ The messengers returned to Jacob, saying, "We came to your brother Esau, and furthermore he is coming to meet you, and four hundred men are with him." ⁷ Then Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed; and he divided the people who were with him, and the flocks and the herds and the camels, into two companies;

Jacob did not know what to expect so he sent messengers in advance of their meeting. If Esau felt threatened that Jacob was pressing his blessing promise to some political advantage over Esau, Jacob tried to ease this fear by having his servants address him as Lord.

He also wanted to reassure him that he had his own wealth and did not need or desire any of Esau's property. He accorded him the respect due an older brother and chief in the area by taking an inferior position. The servants found him sooner than they thought. Esau knew Jacob's caravan was heading in his direction and had already begun riding toward them. He heard the servants but may not have trusted his brother.

Jacob falters in his faith and devises a common tactic: to divide the caravan with the hope that part of it will make it through. In verses 9 to 12, Jacob cries out to God for help in what seemed like an impossible situation.

1. He could not go back to Laban.
2. He could not remain where they were.
3. Going forward to meet Esau could mean death.

Note the elements contained in the prayer of a desperate man: He calls on the true God.

- **ELOHIM** = God of power
- **JEHOVAH** = God of promise

He reviews the promise of God to protect him.

¹⁰ I am unworthy of all the lovingkindness and of all the faithfulness which You have shown to Your servant; for with my staff *only* I crossed this Jordan, and now I have become two companies.

He recognizes his own situation, that the reason he has received blessing and protection is because of God's kindness, not because of his own works or value.

¹¹ Deliver me, I pray, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau; for I fear him, that he will come and attack me *and* the mothers with the children.

He makes a specific request for safety and protection.

¹² For You said, 'I will surely prosper you and make your descendants as the sand of the sea, which is too great to be numbered.'"

This verse summarizes the idea that the protection of God is necessary for the promise to be fulfilled.

Vs. 13-23 – After his prayer Jacob sets about to demonstrate in a concrete way what are the unseen intentions of his heart. He wants peace and reconciliation and the best way to show this is by sending a gift ahead to his brother.

He divides a large portion of his animals into five portions. Each servant is to walk behind each herd or flock. The idea is that as Esau approaches, wave after wave of animals and servants with messages of reconciliation and goodwill will meet him.

Jacob is assured that God will protect him but he is exemplifying God's gracious spirit in his attitude towards his brother. Some say it is a bribe but a bribe is given when no other leverage is available. Jacob had the two angels; he was giving a gift to try to win his brother back in the spirit of Christ.

JACOB WRESTLES WITH GOD – VS. 24-32

Let's set the context for this scene. Jacob has sent his servants and flocks ahead. He has put his wives and children across the river in camp to prepare for the next day's meeting with Esau. He is left alone with his fears, doubts, and prayers. This passage describes his wrestling or conflict in prayer to God as he weighs two opposite forces: God's promise to protect and bless him and the appearance of his brother who has vowed to kill him.

24 Then Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled with him until daybreak.

It is unfortunate that "wrestle" today conjures up an image of sport or show business. Here, to wrestle is to grapple and in context, to cling. Jacob was clinging to God who was appearing as a man.

- I do not believe it was an angel because he says "I have seen God face to face" (Vs. 30).

- God appeared, in the past, as a man to Abraham when He came accompanied by two angels.
- Before Jacob saw the two angels and now he grapples, clings and wrestles with the Lord in the form of a man.

The point is that he is praying for deliverance and he clings to God until he is sure that God will deliver him (Hosea 12:3-5).

²⁵ When he saw that he had not prevailed against him, he touched the socket of his thigh; so the socket of Jacob's thigh was dislocated while he wrestled with him.

It is not that Jacob was stronger but that he clung tenaciously to God in prayer and God permitted it. His infirmity was not a punishment. It was a sign of his experience as well as a demonstration of God's power. God let him hang on, but had greater power.

²⁶ Then he said, "Let me go, for the dawn is breaking." But he said, "I will not let you go unless you bless me." ²⁷ So he said to him, "What is your name?" And he said, "Jacob." ²⁸ He said, "Your name shall no longer be Jacob, but Israel; for you have striven with God and with men and have prevailed." ²⁹ Then Jacob asked him and said, "Please tell me your name." But he said, "Why is it that you ask my name?" And he blessed him there. ³⁰ So Jacob named the place Peniel, for *he said*, "I have seen God face to face, yet my life has been preserved."

Jacob wants the blessing as well as the assurance that God will deliver him and bless him with the things He has promised. To show that he has received it, his name is changed from Jacob (the supplanter) to Israel (the prevailer). Israel means several things depending on which part of the word you emphasize:

- A prince with God
- One who fights victoriously with God
- As a prince, thou has power.

Jacob asks His name but the man asks why he should ask – he should already know. He names the place Peniel which means, "the face of God", which demonstrates that he did know with whom he was struggling.

³¹ Now the sun rose upon him just as he crossed over Penuel, and he was limping on his thigh. ³² Therefore, to this day the sons of Israel do not eat the sinew of the hip which is on the socket of the thigh, because he touched the socket of Jacob's thigh in the sinew of the hip.

He was now ready (even though he was actually weaker because of his infirmity) to meet with his brother. There is also mention of a tradition begun by the Jews to honor Jacob in their food customs.

JACOB'S MEETING WITH ESAU – 33:1-20

¹ Then Jacob lifted his eyes and looked, and behold, Esau was coming, and four hundred men with him. So he divided the children among Leah and Rachel and the two maids. ² He put the maids and their children in front, and Leah and her children next, and Rachel and Joseph last. ³ But he himself passed on ahead of them and bowed down to the ground seven times, until he came near to his brother.

⁴ Then Esau ran to meet him and embraced him, and fell on his neck and kissed him, and they wept. ⁵ He lifted his eyes and saw the women and the children, and said, "Who are these with you?" So he said, "The children whom God has graciously given your servant." ⁶ Then the maids came near with their children, and they bowed down. ⁷ Leah likewise came near with her children, and they bowed down; and afterward Joseph came near with Rachel, and they bowed down.

- Genesis 33:1-7

As soon as daybreak comes, Jacob sees Esau approaching them in the distance. He places his family in order of importance and personal favoritism with the servants and their children first and Rachel with Joseph last.

It was custom in these times for one to bow seven times when approaching a king. Jacob does this to show proper respect to Esau who is the local chieftain. His spiritual vision is such that he can tell the difference between the spiritual significance of the promises and the immediate circumstances that he finds himself in. He can tell the difference and accepts them. He is the rightful inheritor, the one with the blessing, the one who has wrestled with God, but now he is the younger brother come home to face his older brother who is, for now, the local chief.

God's protection is demonstrated not in a mighty military victory but rather in the tender heart of Esau who upon seeing him welcomes him with joy and love. After this Jacob, introduces his family as the brothers unite.

⁸ And he said, "What do you mean by all this company which I have met?" And he said, "To find favor in the sight of my lord."

⁹ But Esau said, "I have plenty, my brother; let what you have be your own." ¹⁰ Jacob said, "No, please, if now I have found favor in your sight, then take my present from my hand, for I see your face as one sees the face of God, and you have received me favorably. ¹¹ Please take my gift which has been brought to you, because God has dealt graciously with me and because I have plenty." Thus he urged him and he took *it*.

We see the final confirmation of their reconciliation as Esau accepts Jacob's gifts. The custom was that the acceptance of a gift demonstrated a true sign of peace.

In the Hebrew Esau says "I have much" and Jacob answers "I have everything" signifying his source of blessing from God. God had worked in both of their hearts to make each of them gracious to one another and thereby protect the promise which Jacob's family was to carry forward.

¹² Then Esau said, "Let us take our journey and go, and I will go before you." ¹³ But he said to him, "My lord knows that the children are frail and that the flocks and herds which are

nursing are a care to me. And if they are driven hard one day, all the flocks will die. ¹⁴ Please let my lord pass on before his servant, and I will proceed at my leisure, according to the pace of the cattle that are before me and according to the pace of the children, until I come to my lord at Seir."

¹⁵ Esau said, "Please let me leave with you some of the people who are with me." But he said, "What need is there? Let me find favor in the sight of my lord." ¹⁶ So Esau returned that day on his way to Seir. ¹⁷ Jacob journeyed to Succoth, and built for himself a house and made booths for his livestock; therefore the place is named Succoth.

Now that the reconciliation was complete, Esau offers to travel with them to help and protect the family.

Jacob declines for several reasons:

1. The fighting men would grow impatient with the slow progress of the women, children and animals in Jacob's group.
2. Jacob probably did not want to begin living in association with Esau who had different values and lifestyle.
3. He was confident that with Esau no longer a threat, he would face no other dangers. He was fully confident in God's protection.

He is traveling slowly and makes a semi-permanent camp in Succoth (which means booths), to rest his animals.

¹⁸ Now Jacob came safely to the city of Shechem, which is in the land of Canaan, when he came from Paddan-aram, and camped before the city. ¹⁹ He bought the piece of land where he had pitched his tent from the hand of the sons of Hamor, Shechem's father, for one hundred pieces of money. ²⁰ Then he erected there an altar and called it El-Elohe-Israel.

The chapter ends with Jacob actually entering the land of Canaan, the land which the promise said would one day belong to his people. He purchases a plot of land from a local Canaanite chieftain.

- The exact location where Abram had first entered the land long ago (Genesis 12:6).
- The place where his son Joseph would be buried long after (Joshua 24:32).

He also builds an altar here and uses his new name for the first time by calling the altar "God is the God of Israel". It is as a token step that in a land of idolatry, Jacob establishes the first place where the land and the altar are owned by believers of the true God.

LESSONS

1. If God is with you, who can be against you?

Jacob learned from experience that no matter how long they tried or how strong they were, his enemies could not prevail against him because he was a child of God. Our shield is faith, our strength is righteous living, and our weapon is the Word of God.

In Jacob's world or in our present one, those who are on God's side have nothing to fear because as Jesus says, once they have taken the body there is nothing left to do. Our enemies, however, should be afraid of God who can destroy both the body and the soul (Matthew 10:28).

2. Pray with all your heart, work with all your might

You cannot substitute faith for work. Faith is the belief that God is true to His word, but there is nothing in His word to suggest that faith somehow substitutes for honest effort, courage, and perseverance. Jacob believed but he worked 20 years for his father-in-law and offered gifts to appease his brother.

Our spirit requires us to pray like everything depends on God; our human nature requires us to work like everything depends on us.

The combination of the two makes for a soul that honors God through a faith demonstrated in honest effort, not just talk.

3. When I am weak, I am strong

- Jacob had to lose even his physical strength.
- Gideon was reduced to 300 men to fight an army of thousands.
- Paul was given a thorn in the flesh.
- Jesus permitted Himself to be mocked and killed.

God's strength and our faith are sometimes better shown when we are stripped away of our glory, when it is **obvious** that what is being accomplished is beyond our strength and ability. We become strong, as witnesses for Christ, when it is His strength that is clearly seen operating in our lives. It is at this point that we let go pride and we are truly strong.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Summarize Genesis 32:1-2 and discuss its significance.
2. Why did Jacob send his servants before him to meet Esau?
3. Summarize Genesis 30:24-32 and answer the following questions:
 - What is the context of Jacob's wrestling with God?
 - How was Jacob able to see God, "face to face" (verse 30)?
 - How do we see God, "face to face"?
4. Summarize the meeting between Jacob and Esau from Genesis 33:1-20 and discuss its significance to us.
5. How can you use this lesson to grow spiritually and help others come into a relationship with Jesus?

41.

On the Run Again

GENESIS 34:1-36:43

We've looked at the reconciliation between Jacob and Esau as Jacob returned home after being with his father-in-law, Laban, for twenty years. We saw how he prepared to meet Esau and the way God strengthened his faith:

- He enabled him to see the angels who were protecting him.
- He appeared to him while Jacob struggled in prayer.

This episode demonstrates Jacob's developing faith as his reliance on God increases, and God reveals Himself more clearly to Jacob. In the end, Jacob meets with Esau and both brothers are reconciled.

Afterwards, Jacob goes on his way to settle in the land of Canaan which had been promised to him by God.

There is now a long period of silence where neither Isaac, Esau nor Jacob is mentioned. The story picks up again as Jacob's sons cause trouble and we see Jacob in the familiar role of being on the run.

THE RAPE OF DINAH – 34:1-31

¹ Now Dinah the daughter of Leah, whom she had borne to Jacob, went out to visit the daughters of the land. ² When Shechem the son of Hamor the Hivite, the prince of the land, saw her, he took her and lay with her by force. ³ He was

deeply attracted to Dinah the daughter of Jacob, and he loved the girl and spoke tenderly to her. ⁴ So Shechem spoke to his father Hamor, saying, "Get me this young girl for a wife."
- Genesis 34:1-4

The problems of raising children in a pagan society are evident here. Dinah, the only daughter, seeks companionship with the young women of the pagan surroundings. Her brothers have each other as companions but she, lacking friends, makes friends with unbelievers. Her closeness to pagan friends gets her noticed, and eventually seduced and raped by the local chief's son.

Note that there is no remorse or rebuke by the father who did not see anything wrong in what his son had done. The young man is infatuated with Dinah, however, and wants to marry her (she is different from the pagan women he has known).

Even in this culture and circumstance marriages were difficult to arrange and so the young man's father begins to negotiate with Jacob's family to propose a marriage between the two.

⁵ Now Jacob heard that he had defiled Dinah his daughter; but his sons were with his livestock in the field, so Jacob kept silent until they came in. ⁶ Then Hamor the father of Shechem went out to Jacob to speak with him. ⁷ Now the sons of Jacob came in from the field when they heard *it*; and the men were grieved, and they were very angry because he had done a disgraceful thing in Israel by lying with Jacob's daughter, for such a thing ought not to be done.

⁸ But Hamor spoke with them, saying, "The soul of my son Shechem longs for your daughter; please give her to him in marriage. ⁹ Intermarry with us; give your daughters to us and take our daughters for yourselves. ¹⁰ Thus you shall live with us, and the land shall be *open* before you; live and trade in it and acquire property in it." ¹¹ Shechem also said to her father and to her brothers, "If I find favor in your sight, then I will give whatever you say to me. ¹² Ask me ever so much bridal payment and gift, and I will give according as you say to me;

but give me the girl in marriage."

¹³ But Jacob's sons answered Shechem and his father Hamor with deceit, because he had defiled Dinah their sister.

¹⁴ They said to them, "We cannot do this thing, to give our sister to one who is uncircumcised, for that would be a disgrace to us. ¹⁵ Only on this *condition* will we consent to you: if you will become like us, in that every male of you be circumcised, ¹⁶ then we will give our daughters to you, and we will take your daughters for ourselves, and we will live with you and become one people. ¹⁷ But if you will not listen to us to be circumcised, then we will take our daughter and go."

¹⁸ Now their words seemed reasonable to Hamor and Shechem, Hamor's son.

Jacob learns of the news and is distressed. Soon after the young man's father arrives to propose not only a marriage but a complete amalgamation of both peoples. It would be oneway Hamor could assimilate Jacob's family and wealth without war or competition.

Of course, the danger here is the destruction of the nation by diluting their family and their faith by intermarrying with pagans. The first step had already begun with Dinah being taken by force.

The brothers propose that if the men of the town are circumcised, they would consent to intermarry, since the circumcision would satisfy their religious convictions. Of course, we will soon see this was a plot for revenge.

Vs. 18-24 – Upon hearing this, Hamor (Dad) and Shechem (son) readily agreed. They returned and convinced the men of the town to be circumcised with the argument that it would be an economic advantage to inter-marry with the Israelites.

A couple of points to note:

1. Jacob is not present when this plan is proposed. He may have known later but he did not approve.

2. Reuben and Judah, the older brothers, were also excluded from the plan and demonstrated (Genesis 37:21) with Joseph that they did not have much stomach for bloodshed.
3. The two main protagonists were Simeon and Levi who, we will see, do the killing.
4. Neither side gave any significance to circumcision:
 - The Amorites accepted it simply to gain access to marriages with Israelites. Much like modern day unbelievers who simply come to church and are even baptized to impress future spouses.
 - The brothers took advantage of the circumcision to kill them. In the Christian era this would be like drowning your enemy in the baptistery.

The Amorites were punished for their blasphemy, and the brothers brought great trouble onto their family.

²⁵ Now it came about on the third day, when they were in pain, that two of Jacob's sons, Simeon and Levi, Dinah's brothers, each took his sword and came upon the city unawares, and killed every male. ²⁶ They killed Hamor and his son Shechem with the edge of the sword, and took Dinah from Shechem's house, and went forth. ²⁷ Jacob's sons came upon the slain and looted the city, because they had defiled their sister. ²⁸ They took their flocks and their herds and their donkeys, and that which was in the city and that which was in the field; ²⁹ and they captured and looted all their wealth and all their little ones and their wives, even all that *was* in the houses. ³⁰ Then Jacob said to Simeon and Levi, "You have brought trouble on me by making me odious among the inhabitants of the land, among the Canaanites and the Perizzites; and my men being few in number, they will gather together against me and attack me and I will be destroyed, I and my household." ³¹ But they said, "Should he treat our sister as a harlot?"

Simeon and Levi go in and kill every male, destroy the town, take back their sister, take the women as slaves and the property as their own. Jacob worries that they will now be attacked by the surrounding pagan tribes. However, his sons pose a question that brings out the real issue:

- What should we have done with our sister raped and treated like a piece of property to be bought and our family purity threatened?

They acted like the rash, zealous young men that they were, but the real question to Jacob was, "Where were you when all this was happening?"

- Jacob was the head of the family, he should have taken the lead to resolve the problem.
- He did not consult God when this happened, he simply left it in the hands of his sons.

Jacob had a leadership problem, was easily swayed (by his mother, by Laban, by his wives and now by his sons). He was an intelligent man of great faith but he was spiritually dry at this point and not providing the leadership that his family needed, and this episode dramatically highlights this.

JACOB'S RENEWAL – CHAPTER 35

¹ Then God said to Jacob, "Arise, go up to Bethel and live there, and make an altar there to God, who appeared to you when you fled from your brother Esau." ² So Jacob said to his household and to all who were with him, "Put away the foreign gods which are among you, and purify yourselves and change your garments; ³ and let us arise and go up to Bethel, and I will make an altar there to God, who answered me in the day of my distress and has been with me wherever I have gone." ⁴ So they gave to Jacob all the foreign gods which they had and the rings which were in their ears, and Jacob hid them under the oak which was near Shechem.

- Genesis 35:1-4

Once again Jacob goes to God in earnest prayer and God appears to him with the instructions to go to Bethel only 15 miles from where he is. It was the place where God had first spoken to him and he had mounted a pillar with the promise to build an altar there one day (which he never did). Perhaps the fact that he never completed the altar symbolizes his lack of resolve to follow through on his initial zeal and faith.

Jacob had grown indifferent spiritually. He was wealthy, had young adults living at home, his faith was unfocused, and this crisis was demonstrating how far he had drifted.

However, we see the renewal in his faith as he gives instructions to his family and household:

1. They purified their surroundings by removing the idols and pagan influences out from their homes and lives. Their 10 years living among pagans had influenced them as they slowly were including their neighbors' idols, customs, and habits in their own lives. The way Levi and Simeon dealt with Hamor and Shechem was more in the character of pagans than believers.
2. There was a re-dedication of each person in the family. By washing and putting on clean garments they were, in essence, saying that they recognized their impurity and were dedicating themselves to a Holy God by themselves being holy. The change in garments signaled a change in attitude: repentance for their sins.
3. There was also a re-direction of their lives. The move to Bethel was not only a geographic move but a spiritual one as well. Bethel was only 15 miles south of where they were but 1000 feet higher in elevation. They were also moving up to a higher spiritual plane.

The building of the altar neglected for so long (he should have done it long ago) and the burial of the idols and pagan influences under the tree represent the burial of the old and resurrection to a new life in serving God.

Let us go back, he says, to the way God has set for us, and the altar at Bethel represented a new beginning for Jacob and his family.

Vs. 5-8 – We see God protect the family as they traveled to Luz (which he re-named El-Bethel = The Strong God of the House of God). Here, his nurse Deborah, dies which means that his mother, Rebekah, had probably died before and the nurse had come to live with Jacob.

Vs. 9-15 – Once there, God appears to Jacob once again to renew the promise to Him:

- That he is indeed a prince (Israel) in case he felt unworthy because of his failure, God reassures him that he can and shall wear this name.
- That great nations will come from him, and that he will not be destroyed by his enemies.
- That the land, even though he moves around on it, will belong to his descendants.

At this point Jacob offers a sacrifice and renews his worship as well as faith at Bethel (House of God).

¹⁶ Then they journeyed from Bethel; and when there was still some distance to go to Ephrath, Rachel began to give birth and she suffered severe labor. ¹⁷ When she was in severe labor the midwife said to her, "Do not fear, for now you have another son." ¹⁸ It came about as her soul was departing (for she died), that she named him Ben-oni; but his father called him Benjamin. ¹⁹ So Rachel died and was buried on the way to Ephrath (that is, Bethlehem). ²⁰ Jacob set up a pillar over her grave; that is the pillar of Rachel's grave to this day.

Rachel dies giving birth to the 12th son:

- She calls him "son of sorrow" but Jacob re-names his "son of my right hand."

- They were on their way from Bethel south to where his father, Isaac, lived.
- She was buried in the area near Bethlehem.

The trauma, the moving and the pregnancy were too much and Rachel becomes a casualty of this time in Jacob's life.

Vs. 21-26 – Another episode tells of Reuben, the oldest son, having sex with Bilhah, Rachel's maid and Jacob's concubine. No mention is made of any rebuke here but later on Jacob will deny Reuben his birthright as oldest son because of this indiscretion (Genesis 49:3-4). The twelve sons are named once again before Jacob finally arrives at his original home to present them to his father, Isaac, before his death.

²⁷ Jacob came to his father Isaac at Mamre of Kiriath-arba (that is, Hebron), where Abraham and Isaac had sojourned.

²⁸ Now the days of Isaac were one hundred and eighty years. ²⁹ Isaac breathed his last and died and was gathered to his people, an old man of ripe age; and his sons Esau and Jacob buried him.

Jacob (now Israel) finally comes home to his father, Isaac. The writer mentions Isaac's death in this passage but in reality this happened later on. In any event, Isaac is buried by his two sons who are in fellowship with each other. He is buried in the same place as his wife, Rebekah, his father, Abraham, and his mother, Sarah.

ESAU'S DESCENDANTS – 36:1-43

Chapter 36 lists the descendants of Esau in one complete section. There is no description of his life or times but simply a record of his sons, daughters, and the location of his descendants.

The Edomites, as they were called, were a mixture of his descendants and the Canaanite people that lived around him. This record is given to show the separate development of Esau's family line from Jacob's descendants who had the promise.

LESSONS

1. You marry who you date

This is an ancient story but teaches a modern and consistent truth. Dinah had no other friends and sought fellowship and companionship in a pagan setting and, consequently, was the object of pagan custom and practice.

We cannot expect our Christian sons and daughters to form Christian friendships, and relationships if we do not promote Christian socializing influences on them:

- Youth groups
- Camps
- Church attendance
- Christian colleges
- Christian friends in our homes

If 90% of our children's contacts are with non-Christians then the odds are 90% that they will end up marrying non-Christians and raising non-Christian children.

2. Leadership abhors a vacuum

When leaders do not lead, someone or something will lead in their place. Jacob was absent in leadership, he was asleep at the wheel and his sons took over and did what they thought was right. Their actions simply caused more problems.

If leaders in the church do not lead in a pro-active way, then someone or something else will take over:

- Apathy
- Division
- Competition
- False teaching

Leaders can let the ship steer itself for only so long, but sooner or later God will send a wake-up call and, like Jacob, it is usually not very pleasant.

3. Renewal requires continual repentance

Jacob's renewal required that he remove the idols, cleanse his household, get to work changing his home, build the altar at Bethel and start worshipping again. We cannot go forward spiritually unless we repent of our sins on a continual basis. We usually blame someone else for our spiritual apathy, but the person responsible is usually ourselves. You do not experience renewal or revival by having a meeting or organizing a project. Renewal comes when we recognize what is coming between ourselves and God and get rid of it.

Jacob got rid of the idols, the indifference, the involvement with pagans – our renewal comes in exactly the same way.

- Remove the sins and purify ourselves.
- Remove the indifference and become faithful to our ministry, our Lord, our church.
- Remove the involvement with the world and sinners and begin to draw closer to Jesus and His people.

If we do these things, renewal will come.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Summarize the events of Genesis 34:1-36:43.
2. What concerns do we share with Jacob as we raise our families in a society that does not honor God?
3. How did God renew His promise to Jacob (Genesis 35) and what can we learn from this?
4. How can you use this lesson to grow spiritually and help others come into a relationship with Jesus?

42.

The Beginning of the End

GENESIS 37:1-36

In the previous chapter we reviewed the incident where Dinah was raped and the ensuing events where Jacob's sons went in and killed the villagers where this took place. This led to their moving away from that area back to the land where Jacob's (now Israel's) father Isaac lived. It was a time of rededication for Jacob and his family as they purified themselves and headed back to his ancestral home.

We also looked briefly at Esau's family line and ended with Isaac's death and burial with the brothers Esau and Jacob reconciled.

Our next section will begin with the story of Joseph, Jacob's second youngest son by Rachel, and the bridge to their travel to Egypt where the book of Genesis will end.

A NEW WRITER

¹ Now Jacob lived in the land where his father had sojourned, in the land of Canaan. ^{2a} These are the records of the generations of Jacob.

- Genesis 37:1-2a

The beginning of this chapter marks the end of Jacob's long record of events and the beginning of a new writer. The previous two chapters recording the death of Isaac and the summary of Esau's family end off Jacob's record and now a new writer (probably Joseph) with the editorial

comments of Moses (who was familiar with these events) begins his record.

The first thing he says is that Jacob, like his father, did not see the fulfillment of the land promise and like his father and grandfather – lived as a stranger in the land that would eventually belong to his descendants.

JOSEPH AND HIS DREAMS

^{2b} Joseph, when seventeen years of age, was pasturing the flock with his brothers while he was still a youth, along with the sons of Bilhah and the sons of Zilpah, his father's wives. And Joseph brought back a bad report about them to their father. ³ Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his sons, because he was the son of his old age; and he made him a varicolored tunic. ⁴ His brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers; and so they hated him and could not speak to him on friendly terms.

Joseph was the first-born of Jacob's favorite wife, Rachel, born to him in his old age. He favored this child by giving him charge over the flock (feeding means not only giving food, but also being responsible for). As a sign of his authority and favor Jacob made him a special coat. The Hebrew word could mean color or long sleeves. Either way the coat symbolized favor.

Because of his apparent favoritism, the other brothers who had disappointed their father with much of their previous behavior were made to hate Joseph as well, to the point that their feelings were open and vocal.

The term "son of his old age" could also mean "wise son" which could suggest that Joseph was intelligent beyond his years (later we see he was a good organizer and administrator). So we have a young boy who is bright becoming a father's favorite and being given extra responsibility because of it and his brothers hating him for it.

⁵ Then Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers, they hated him even more. ⁶ He said to them, "Please listen to this dream which I have had; ⁷ for behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and lo, my sheaf rose up and also stood erect; and behold, your sheaves gathered around and bowed down to my sheaf." ⁸ Then his brothers said to him, "Are you actually going to reign over us? Or are you really going to rule over us?" So they hated him even more for his dreams and for his words.

The dream at this point can be simply a product of an overambitious mind. We find out later that it was from God and fulfilled in Egypt. For the moment, Joseph uses the dream and its significance to rise up above his older brothers, and gain their respect.

This of course has the opposite effect in that they resent his words and begin hating him even more deeply than before.

⁹ Now he had still another dream, and related it to his brothers, and said, "Lo, I have had still another dream; and behold, the sun and the moon and eleven stars were bowing down to me." ¹⁰ He related it to his father and to his brothers; and his father rebuked him and said to him, "What is this dream that you have had? Shall I and your mother and your brothers actually come to bow ourselves down before you to the ground?" ¹¹ His brothers were jealous of him, but his father kept the saying in mind.

Joseph's next dream is in the same form as the first but now the entire family is involved, including Leah and Jacob. Jacob, who had known God more intimately than any in his generation, rebuked Joseph for suggesting that he and the others would bow down to him. But the next verse says that with time Jacob began to consider the possibility of this.

- God did work through dreams at that time.
- He was the youngest and God had chosen him over his older brothers.

- Joseph was obviously more spiritually minded and as his favorite he would like to see him blessed by God.

The brothers may have seen the change in Jacob's attitude because now they not only hated him, they began to envy him as well. This may have been because they suspected that what he dreamt may have been the truth and that God would bless him in some special way over them.

JOSEPH SOLD INTO SLAVERY – VS. 12-36

¹² Then his brothers went to pasture their father's flock in Shechem. ¹³ Israel said to Joseph, "Are not your brothers pasturing the flock in Shechem? Come, and I will send you to them." And he said to him, "I will go." ¹⁴ Then he said to him, "Go now and see about the welfare of your brothers and the welfare of the flock, and bring word back to me." So he sent him from the valley of Hebron, and he came to Shechem.

For some reason the brothers returned to Shechem to feed their flock, the place where some of them had massacred the town in revenge for Dinah's rape. Jacob was concerned about them because they were in hostile territory so he sends Joseph to find out if they are safe.

¹⁵ A man found him, and behold, he was wandering in the field; and the man asked him, "What are you looking for?"

¹⁶ He said, "I am looking for my brothers; please tell me where they are pasturing the flock." ¹⁷ Then the man said, "They have moved from here; for I heard them say, 'Let us go to Dothan.'" So Joseph went after his brothers and found them at Dothan.

Joseph does not find them at Shechem but learns that they have travelled 20 miles northward to a place called Dotham. They were upset and in no mood to be around their home so they wandered to pasture in further places. The word Dotham means "two cisterns or two wells". It was an area that had a good water supply. Apparently one of the wells was dry because this is where they eventually threw Joseph.

¹⁸ When they saw him from a distance and before he came close to them, they plotted against him to put him to death.

¹⁹ They said to one another, "Here comes this dreamer! ²⁰ Now then, come and let us kill him and throw him into one of the pits; and we will say, 'A wild beast devoured him.' Then let us see what will become of his dreams!" ²¹ But Reuben heard this and rescued him out of their hands and said, "Let us not take his life." ²² Reuben further said to them, "Shed no blood.

Throw him into this pit that is in the wilderness, but do not lay hands on him"—that he might rescue him out of their hands, to restore him to his father.

Sin has no age or culture. At least 4,000 years ago this scene is being played out. A younger brother's arrogance creates jealousy, resentments and hatred in his brothers' hearts. That hatred in the heart eventually turns to murderous intent. Jesus said that if you harbored anger in your heart you were already guilty in God's court of murdering your brother – because one naturally leads to the other if not checked.

They do not want to shed his blood because of God's warning against the shedding blood. They knew that if they did, God would require it of them. Note their legalistic attitude in thinking that the way they killed him would get them around God's command. Rationalization and denial were big in those days as well as today.

It is interesting that Reuben, who had acted so badly with his father's concubine, was now showing some leadership in trying to save his brother. He had a lot to gain by Joseph's death because it would guarantee that he held on to his position. However he was not a man of violence like Simeon and Levi.

So they decide to put him into one of the empty wells to die of starvation (Reuben of course thinking he could come back and save him).

²³ So it came about, when Joseph reached his brothers, that they stripped Joseph of his tunic, the varicolored tunic that was on him; ²⁴ and they took him and threw him into the pit. Now the pit was empty, without any water in it.

²⁵ Then they sat down to eat a meal. And as they raised their eyes and looked, behold, a caravan of Ishmaelites was coming from Gilead, with their camels bearing aromatic gum and balm and myrrh, on their way to bring them down to Egypt. ²⁶ Judah said to his brothers, "What profit is it for us to kill our brother and cover up his blood? ²⁷ Come and let us sell him to the Ishmaelites and not lay our hands on him, for he is our brother, our own flesh." And his brothers listened to him.

²⁸ Then some Midianite traders passed by, so they pulled him up and lifted Joseph out of the pit, and sold him to the Ishmaelites for twenty shekels of silver. Thus they brought Joseph into Egypt.

For some reason Reuben is not present in the next scene as the brothers discuss Joseph's situation further. A caravan came through and now Judah, the fourth oldest, proposes a plan that will solve several problems at once – sell him as a slave to Egypt:

- This would avoid killing him and having his blood on their hands.
- This would guarantee no one could rescue him from the well.
- This would also rid them of his influence and presence in the family.
- They would also make some money from this deal.

Reuben is not there, Simeon and Levi are violent men, and it is left to Judah to plead for Joseph's life. He could not oppose the others by force so he devises a plan that will do the best considering the circumstances.

Later on in Genesis 42:21, it says that all the while these arguments were going on, Joseph was pleading with his brothers with an anguished soul. Imagine, you are 17 years old, and your brothers are debating whether to kill you, let you starve or sell you into slavery where you will never see your home again.

They finally sell him for 20 pieces of silver.

Later, the price for the dedication of a young boy will be fixed at 20 pieces of silver by the priests (Leviticus 27:5) and the price for a mature male slave will become 30 pieces of silver.

²⁹ Now Reuben returned to the pit, and behold, Joseph was not in the pit; so he tore his garments. ³⁰ He returned to his brothers and said, "The boy is not there; as for me, where am I to go?" ³¹ So they took Joseph's tunic, and slaughtered a male goat and dipped the tunic in the blood; ³² and they sent the varicolored tunic and brought it to their father and said, "We found this; please examine it to see whether it is your son's tunic or not." ³³ Then he examined it and said, "It is my son's tunic. A wild beast has devoured him; Joseph has surely been torn to pieces!"

Reuben returns to rescue Joseph and, when he sees that Joseph is missing, is terribly grieved. As the oldest he is responsible and now does not know what he is going to tell his father concerning Joseph.

The plan is to bring back Joseph's coat soaked in blood and allow Jacob to draw his own conclusions, which he does. He is shocked and does not question them, not even about the fact that the coat itself is not torn or there is no sign of the body.

³⁴ So Jacob tore his clothes, and put sackcloth on his loins and mourned for his son many days. ³⁵ Then all his sons and all his daughters arose to comfort him, but he refused to be comforted. And he said, "Surely I will go down to Sheol in mourning for my son." So his father wept for him. ³⁶ Meanwhile, the Midianites sold him in Egypt to Potiphar, Pharaoh's officer, the captain of the bodyguard.

Jacob's response was total and inconsolable grief:

- He had lost his beloved Rachel only a few years before.
- Now Joseph his favorite son had been killed.

- He also feared for the promise because without Joseph there seemed to be none of his sons who could carry on the spiritual leadership of the family.

His sons and daughters eventually became worried because he was intent on mourning until he died and could be with his dead son. This was hypocritical on their part considering what they had done.

Joseph is eventually sold to Potiphar. The term "officer" is the Hebrew word Saris which means eunuch. This may explain the motivation of his wife to have sex with Joseph later on. Potiphar was also captain of the guard. This entailed the gruesome job of being the king's official executioner.

The chapter ends with Joseph now beginning a new life in Egypt as God's plan begins to unfold.

LESSONS

1. Be careful how you use spiritual gifts

Joseph was obviously a favored son and had many talents. His dreams demonstrated that God wanted to use him in special ways. Because of his youth however, Joseph allowed these things to go to his head and became arrogant rather than being humbled by his gifts.

What he should have done was to go to God in prayer for greater understanding and direction. Or he should have sought his father's advice in private. Instead, he showed off and paid the price for his pride.

In the New Testament, we see the same type of things happening in the Corinthian church where young Christians in the faith are blessed with great spiritual gifts but use them to show off or compete with each other for pre-eminence in the church.

We need to remember that whatever gifts you have in the church:

- Romans 12: Preaching, teaching, serving in some way with a skill of some kind, leadership ability, counseling, benevolence, or the ability to make and give money.

These gifts as well as the miraculous gifts given in the first century were given with two purposes in mind: to honor and serve and to serve others in some way.

Sometimes our prayer is for God to reveal to us what our gift is; sometimes it is to help find a way to use our gifts but our gifts are never for our own glory or wealth. For example:

- Mozart had a gift of musical genius but spent it on himself in a wasted life.
- Beethoven also had the same genius but on every sheet of music he would inscribe – "to God be the glory."

2. We all need refinement

Joseph had the gift of prophecy in the ability to interpret dreams but God had to work on his character before he could become useful to Him. His suffering refined his spirit to where he trusted in God, humbled himself and eventually forgave and loved his brothers.

His experience is much like our own. Much of what happens to us is used by God to refine and purify our character and prepare us for service on earth or life in heaven.

If there was no God we could curse our luck for illness or adversity, but because there is a God who knows and acts and is in charge, we can trust that "God causes all things to work together for good..." Romans 8:28. God **causes** in that He eventually makes all good and bad things work for His good purposes.

3. Sometimes you have to stand up for right

Reuben's problem was that he was soft. Instead of finding his own wife, he took the woman closest to him, his father's concubine. Instead of

standing up to his brothers and claiming his rightful authority as oldest and denounce the deed as wrong, he tried to devise a sneaky plan to save Joseph. His inability to stand up cost him his blessing and the chance to redeem himself with his father by saving Joseph.

Negotiating and compromising diplomatically is important and necessary, but sometimes, especially when it comes to what is right according to God, you have to draw the line and stand up for what is right. In your home, church, and community.

If God's own people do not, who will?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Summarize the evidence of a new writer for the Geneses narrative and the significance of this.
2. Summarize the dreams of Joseph from Genesis 37:2-11 and their impact on his relationship with his brothers.
3. What is the relationship between Joseph's brothers selling him into slavery and our slavery into the bondage of sin?
4. What can we learn about our heavenly Father's grief at the separation we cause and the grief Jacob experienced when he was separated from Joseph?
5. How can you use this lesson to grow spiritually and help others come into a relationship with Jesus?

43.

Judah and Tamar

GENESIS 38:1-30

Our previous chapter began with the record of the last of the writers of the book of Genesis, Joseph. It chronicled his story from a young, proud, and ambitious man who was resented and nearly killed by his brothers to the point where he was sold into slavery in Egypt as a result of their hatred for him.

We saw how he was blessed by God with spiritual gifts and through their misuse was separated from his brothers.

This will set the stage for the final episode in the book of Genesis which will be the settling of the children of Israel (Jacob) in the land of Egypt where they will eventually be enslaved.

The next book of the Bible, Exodus, will be the story of God's deliverance of these people to the Promised Land. But first, we take a small detour as the narrative shifts from Joseph for one chapter and gives us a glimpse into the life of the brother through whom the Messiah would come.

STORY OF JUDAH

- ¹ And it came about at that time, that Judah departed from his brothers and visited a certain Adullamite, whose name was Hirah. ² Judah saw there a daughter of a certain Canaanite whose name was Shua; and he took her and went in to her. ³ So she conceived and bore a son and he named him Er. ⁴ Then she conceived again and bore a son and named him

Onan.⁵ She bore still another son and named him Shelah; and it was at Chezib that she bore him.

- Genesis 38:1-5

After the incident with Joseph, Judah decides to leave the family compound and strike out on his own. He looks for and finds a wife without consulting God or his father Jacob.

The wife he takes is a Canaanite woman who was a pagan, and as we see by the actions of his sons, probably never converted to the worship of Jehovah. They had three sons:

- **ER** – watcher, named by Judah
- **ONAN** – strong, named by his mother
- **SHELAH** – uncertain, also named by his mother.

The significance of the mother naming the two last children suggests a tilting of influence in the home towards the mother since it was normally the father who gave the names. (Same with Jacob whose wives named the children and had tremendous influence in the homes and over Jacob).

⁶ Now Judah took a wife for Er his firstborn, and her name was Tamar. ⁷ But Er, Judah's firstborn, was evil in the sight of the Lord, so the Lord took his life. ⁸ Then Judah said to Onan, "Go in to your brother's wife, and perform your duty as a brother-in-law to her, and raise up offspring for your brother." ⁹ Onan knew that the offspring would not be his; so when he went in to his brother's wife, he wasted his seed on the ground in order not to give offspring to his brother. ¹⁰ But what he did was displeasing in the sight of the Lord; so He took his life also.

Although Judah chose his own wife without help from God or Jacob, he seems to recognize the folly of this course and wants to secure a better arrangement for his own son.

We know nothing of Tamar (which means to be erect, to stand straight, a palm tree) but her name and the fact that Judah specifically chose her suggests that in the pagan environment, she was a woman of principle and strength.

We see, by the fact that Er was a wicked man, that the mother's pagan influence seemed to have an effect on him. The messianic line was to come through Judah and so God destroyed Er before he could be part of that genealogy (the fact that He did not destroy Tamar speaks on her behalf).

Judah then presses on to Onan, the brother, the responsibility to carry on his elder brother's lineage by marrying his widow. This was called levirate regulation (from a Latin word *levir* meaning brother-in-law). This was an ancient custom used to protect land and property rights within families. If a brother died without children, the nearest relative would marry the widow and the first male child would belong, as far as succession rights were concerned, to the dead relative and carry his name. Other children would legally belong to the new father.

Onan has seen the result of his brother's wickedness so he goes along with this but in the end refuses to produce children for his dead brother (he is afraid that he will have to share some of his own property with his brother's child). He has intercourse but interrupts conception; for this rebellion God slays him as well.

- The term *ONANISM* was often used to refer to masturbation and this passage was often used to show that this practice was a sin.
- This passage however is about obedience to God and the punishment that disobedience brings. The Bible does not comment directly about the sexual issues of masturbation, birth control or sexual practice within marriage. The principles that guide us in these include fidelity (Hebrews 13:4), mutual respect and cooperation (I Corinthians 7:3-7) and Christian decency (I Thessalonians 4:4).

It is important that when we try to prove a point using the Bible, we make the point that the Bible makes, not the point that we want to make using the Bible incorrectly and out of context.

¹¹ Then Judah said to his daughter-in-law Tamar, "Remain a widow in your father's house until my son Shelah grows up"; for he thought, "*I am afraid* that he too may die like his brothers." So Tamar went and lived in her father's house.

¹² Now after a considerable time Shua's daughter, the wife of Judah, died; and when the time of mourning was ended, Judah went up to his sheepshearers at Timnah, he and his friend Hirah the Adullamite.

Tamar lived with Judah and his sons but to avoid further trouble he sends her back to her father. He promises to send his youngest to marry her when he is old enough but was probably afraid to do so considering what had happened to his other sons.

In the meantime his own wife dies and after a time of mourning he goes to the shearing of sheep with his friends. This suggests he may not have been in terrible grief because shearing time was usually accompanied by a festival and Judah planned to take in the festivities along with his friends.

¹³ It was told to Tamar, "Behold, your father-in-law is going up to Timnah to shear his sheep." ¹⁴ So she removed her widow's garments and covered *herself* with a veil, and wrapped herself, and sat in the gateway of Enaim, which is on the road to Timnah; for she saw that Shelah had grown up, and she had not been given to him as a wife. ¹⁵ When Judah saw her, he thought she was a harlot, for she had covered her face. ¹⁶ So he turned aside to her by the road, and said, "Here now, let me come in to you"; for he did not know that she was his daughter-in-law. And she said, "What will you give me, that you may come in to me?" ¹⁷ He said, therefore, "I will send you a young goat from the flock." She said, moreover, "Will you give a pledge until you send *it*?" ¹⁸ He said, "What pledge shall

I give you?" And she said, "Your seal and your cord, and your staff that is in your hand." So he gave *them* to her and went in to her, and she conceived by him.¹⁹ Then she arose and departed, and removed her veil and put on her widow's garments.

The problem for Tamar was that Judah had originally contracted for her to be in his family in order to continue the line. She had been willing, had perhaps begun to worship the God of Judah but was denied her rightful place.

Her plan was to trick her father-in-law into fulfilling her plan to carry on the family line:

- It may have less to do with a desire to carry on the blessing than a fear of being discarded altogether.
- She was twice widowed with God killing her husbands and denied the third, so her prospects were grim.
- She may have also felt a right to carry the line despite the method.

She disguises herself as a "temple prostitute" because later on she is referred to as a "separated one" which was the term for temple prostitute rather than a common prostitute.

Temple prostitution was a respectable occupation in Canaanite society with many of the women in the village taking turns serving at the temple as their way of making an offering to their own god or goddess.

This does not excuse the practice but rather gives insight into Tamar's thinking that what she was doing was not for lust or money and a normal part of her cultural practices.

Judah, of course, was a different story. He knew better concerning foreign gods, prostitution and fornication. Again he did not seek God or his father to help him find a new wife. He allowed the passions stirred by the festival

activities and his loneliness to make him vulnerable to this type of situation.

Their union produces a child and Judah leaves some of his personal belongings as a promise that he will pay her later for her services. The fact that she returns home confirms that her actions were not motivated by greed or lust but rather by desperation.

Weak faith will drive people to do foolish and desperate things rather than trust God for help.

²⁰ When Judah sent the young goat by his friend the Adullamite, to receive the pledge from the woman's hand, he did not find her. ²¹ He asked the men of her place, saying, "Where is the temple prostitute who was by the road at Enaim?" But they said, "There has been no temple prostitute here." ²² So he returned to Judah, and said, "I did not find her; and furthermore, the men of the place said, 'There has been no temple prostitute here.'" ²³ Then Judah said, "Let her keep them, otherwise we will become a laughingstock. After all, I sent this young goat, but you did not find her."

Despite his weakness, Judah is a man of his word and wants to fulfill his agreement. He may be embarrassed about his actions so he sends his friend to find Tamar but he does not find her. ("Harlot" is the word for temple prostitute.)

²⁴ Now it was about three months later that Judah was informed, "Your daughter-in-law Tamar has played the harlot, and behold, she is also with child by harlotry." Then Judah said, "Bring her out and let her be burned!" ²⁵ It was while she was being brought out that she sent to her father-in-law, saying, "I am with child by the man to whom these things belong." And she said, "Please examine and see, whose signet ring and cords and staff are these?" ²⁶ Judah recognized *them*, and said, "She is more righteous than I, inasmuch as I did not

give her to my son Shelah." And he did not have relations with her again.

Judah is indignant at the news of her pregnancy and pronounces judgment.

- She was still under his authority.
- Technically engaged to his son.
- Widow of his other two sons.
- Disgraced his family by bringing another man's child into his own family.

He may have been secretly happy of disposing of her and avoiding the dilemma of his third son having to opt out of marrying her and the problems this would cause with her family. But he finds out the truth!

Judah shows some of the character that God saw in him in order to grant to him the honor of being the line through which the Messiah would come: he tells the truth about his involvement with her instead of denying it; he confesses the true sin, not giving her his third son which he was dutifully legally bound to do; he also absolves her of blame and guilt by acknowledging that she was righteous and he was not.

- Her methods were deceptive but she was morally correct in claiming what rightfully belonged to her.
- He acknowledges that it was his actions that pressured her to act in the way she did.

He does the right thing by not taking her sexually anymore but acknowledges her children as his own for their proper inheritance and name, as the Law demanded.

²⁷ It came about at the time she was giving birth, that behold, there were twins in her womb. ²⁸ Moreover, it took place while she was giving birth, one put out a hand, and the midwife took and tied a scarlet *thread* on his hand, saying,

"This one came out first." ²⁹ But it came about as he drew back his hand, that behold, his brother came out. Then she said, "What a breach you have made for yourself!" So he was named Perez. ³⁰ Afterward his brother came out who had the scarlet *thread* on his hand; and he was named Zerah.

A short summary describing her twins and the unusual parallel between them and Jacob and Esau's struggle in generations past.

We know that both brothers and Shelah, Judah's remaining son, married and had large families. Later in the genealogies, the second child, Perez, who appeared second but came out first was the one who was the ancestor of David and through whom came the Christ.

This ends a sidelight chapter meant to show how Judah fathered the child that ultimately linked him to the birth of the Christ.

The next chapter will pick up the story of Joseph and his time in Egypt which will bring us to the close of this first book of the Bible.

LESSONS

1. Children are influenced by both parents

Judah was shortsighted and underestimated the influence that his wife would have on his family.

The case for marrying a Christian becomes very important especially when it comes to children. Unfortunately young people do not see that far ahead, they only consider the existing relationship and not the ones that will exist in the future. This is why it is important not only to encourage them to marry Christians but in the event that they do not, parents need to help provide Christian influence in their grandchildren's lives missing because of the disbelief of one or both of the parents.

Note that Jacob's name is not mentioned here at all.

2. God can cause all things to work for good

I mentioned it in this last lesson but it bears repeating:

God chose Judah to carry the line; his poor judgment and weakness; his wicked rebellious sons; his pagan wife; Tamar's helplessness and deceptive plan... and yet God managed to **cause** all of these negative things to work together to achieve His goals.

- The wicked will still be judged.
- The weak will still suffer the consequences of their mistakes.

But God's plan will not be thwarted, even by our own poor judgment and mistakes.

This should give us confidence to go ahead when we are not sure; to persevere even when we make mistakes; to maintain our hope of salvation even when the evidence around us points to the conclusion that we are not going to make it. God's plan is to bring the faithful to heaven and He will accomplish that plan no matter what.

3. It is not who you are, it is who God makes you

It is interesting to note that in the genealogy of Jesus only four women are mentioned:

- **Tamar** – a Canaanite who tricked her father-in-law into sleeping with her.
- **Rahab** – a prostitute who hid the Jewish spies.
- **Ruth** – a Moabite who persuaded Boaz to marry her.
- **Bathsheba** – a Hittite woman who committed adultery with David.

None were Jews, all came into the messianic line under dubious circumstances but all were transformed by their contact with the men who believed in God.

- Tamar clung to the promise of Judah to belong to the Israelite nation through marriage and childbearing.
- Rahab who left prostitution and married Salmon after the Jews captured Jericho.
- Ruth followed her mother-in-law Naomi and adopted her faith which led her to Boaz and her marriage with him.
- Bathsheba became the key influence in making sure Solomon became king after David, ensuring the unity of Israel at that time.

God took these women who were pagans and because of their conversion and faith used them in a mighty way to preserve the lineage through which Jesus came.

There is hope for those who have unbelieving partners, there is hope for those who have questionable backgrounds because God can make valuable servants out of anyone regardless of their past and give everyone a glorious future. These women are proof of this.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Summarize the key events of Genesis 38:10-30 and state their significance.
2. How do the events of Judah and Tamar's lives support the role of parents in influencing the faith of children?
(See also Ephesians 5:22-33; 6:1-4)
3. How can parents recover their role as spiritual leaders of their families?
4. How can we influence an unbelieving partner to establish a relationship with God?
5. What does the use of the four women mentioned in this event teach us about how God uses us?
6. How can you use this lesson to grow spiritually and help others come into a relationship with Jesus?

44.

Joseph's Story

GENESIS 39:1-40:23

We've taken a side trip in looking at a portion of Judah's life. He was Jacob's fourth son. The purpose of the story was to explain the background of Jesus' genealogy from Jacob through Judah.

We will now carry on with the narrative concerning the main story of Joseph, the eleventh son of Jacob, and how he fared after being sold into slavery in Egypt. The last time we saw him he had been transported to Egypt and sold to a man named Potiphar who was the king's captain of guard and chief executioner.

This chapter will deal with Joseph's experience in this new country and situation.

ANCIENT EGYPT

Egypt was already an old country by the time Joseph arrived there. It was a nation ruled by Pharaohs (meaning great house) who handed power down from generation to generation through family dynasties.

Scholars do not know for sure which king ruled when Joseph was there (the Bible only refers to him as Pharaoh – the title). Some believe that it was the *HYKSOS* dynasty because these rulers were foreign kings that had conquered Egypt and had a Semitic (from the family of Shem – Noah's son, Abraham's ancestor) blood. This explains the king's favorable treatment of Joseph and his family later on.

In later centuries these dynasties were forced out of power and replaced by native Egyptian born kings which some suggest may explain why Joseph's ancestors were subsequently treated harshly. This was probably done because the descendants of Joseph may have been seen as distant relatives of the foreign kings now expelled and replaced by Egyptian ones.

Nevertheless, Joseph is in a pagan country that had very low moral standards and practiced polytheism (worship of many gods).

JOSEPH IN POTIPHAR'S HOUSE

¹ Now Joseph had been taken down to Egypt; and Potiphar, an Egyptian officer of Pharaoh, the captain of the bodyguard, bought him from the Ishmaelites, who had taken him down there. ² The Lord was with Joseph, so he became a successful man. And he was in the house of his master, the Egyptian.

³ Now his master saw that the Lord was with him and *how* the Lord caused all that he did to prosper in his hand. ⁴ So Joseph found favor in his sight and became his personal servant; and he made him overseer over his house, and all that he owned he put in his charge. ⁵ It came about that from the time he made him overseer in his house and over all that he owned, the Lord blessed the Egyptian's house on account of Joseph; thus the Lord's blessing was upon all that he owned, in the house and in the field. ⁶ So he left everything he owned in Joseph's charge; and with him *there* he did not concern himself with anything except the food which he ate.

Now Joseph was handsome in form and appearance.

- Genesis 39:1-6

Potiphar was captain and chief executioner. The word "officer" means eunuch.

- It was common in those days to castrate high officials to prevent them from interfering in the king's harem or staging a military coup in order to begin a family dynasty of their own.

- Potiphar may have agreed to this in order to reach high office after marriage, or his wife married him to reach a high social plateau without regard to his sexual limitations.

This part also gives us a good physical and character description of Joseph (which the Bible rarely does). Joseph was handsome and intelligent. He was a good administrator and trustworthy. He became successful and, as far as a slave could, became independent. He showed that he was a godly, spiritual man.

All of Joseph's good qualifications and work were attributed to the presence of God in his life and this was made evident to Joseph's master.

⁷ It came about after these events that his master's wife looked with desire at Joseph, and she said, "Lie with me." ⁸ But he refused and said to his master's wife, "Behold, with me *here*, my master does not concern himself with anything in the house, and he has put all that he owns in my charge. ⁹ There is no one greater in this house than I, and he has withheld nothing from me except you, because you are his wife. How then could I do this great evil and sin against God?" ¹⁰ As she spoke to Joseph day after day, he did not listen to her to lie beside her *or* be with her.

For reasons made a little clearer by the fact we know Potiphar was a eunuch, his wife became desirous of Joseph and tried to have sex with him. We see Joseph deal with the situation but in an ineffective way. He tries to reason with her by convincing her with the things that he is convinced with: it would be hurtful to her husband who has been so good to him and it would be a sin against God.

The point here is that this woman does not care about what her husband feels (she is seducing a slave in her husband's own house) and she is a pagan so arguments about God will have no effect on her. Joseph is probably being naïve here in thinking that reviewing his own reasons for avoiding sins will dissuade the one who is tempting him to sin.

Sometimes this is just a stalling tactic we use in order to take in the aroma of sin without taking a bite. Like Eve, we stand around reviewing why we should not do something instead of being proactive and rebuking the temptation and the tempter.

Joseph was in a difficult position because telling his master might have gotten him killed. One thing he did not do, however, was to appeal to God for help at this point.

¹¹ Now it happened one day that he went into the house to do his work, and none of the men of the household was there inside. ¹² She caught him by his garment, saying, "Lie with me!" And he left his garment in her hand and fled, and went outside. ¹³ When she saw that he had left his garment in her hand and had fled outside, ¹⁴ she called to the men of her household and said to them, "See, he has brought in a Hebrew to us to make sport of us; he came in to me to lie with me, and I screamed. ¹⁵ When he heard that I raised my voice and screamed, he left his garment beside me and fled and went outside." ¹⁶ So she left his garment beside her until his master came home. ¹⁷ Then she spoke to him with these words, "The Hebrew slave, whom you brought to us, came in to me to make sport of me; ¹⁸ and as I raised my voice and screamed, he left his garment beside me and fled outside."

¹⁹ Now when his master heard the words of his wife, which she spoke to him, saying, "This is what your slave did to me," his anger burned. ²⁰ So Joseph's master took him and put him into the jail, the place where the king's prisoners were confined; and he was there in the jail.

The seduction fails and the wife is angry and humiliated at being refused, so she cries "rape."

- The thrust of her attack, however, is not that she may have been sexually attacked, but that a foreigner had such power in the household and thought he could try something like this. (Jealous of his influence)

- Note that Potiphar's anger is kindled but it does not say he was angry at Joseph.

The fact that he was not killed and ultimately rose to prominence in the prison suggests that Potiphar may have been less angry about his wife's accusations and more annoyed in losing his right-hand man.

- Had he been in a jealous rage, Joseph would have been a dead man; instead he was put in prison and still allowed a lot of freedom there.
- This does not minimize his suffering or the injustice of the matter, but it does explain why he was not executed.

²¹ But the Lord was with Joseph and extended kindness to him, and gave him favor in the sight of the chief jailer. ²² The chief jailer committed to Joseph's charge all the prisoners who were in the jail; so that whatever was done there, he was responsible for it. ²³ The chief jailer did not supervise anything under Joseph's charge because the Lord was with him; and whatever he did, the Lord made to prosper.

Joseph demonstrates his great talents and the fact that God is blessing him. The Bible shows that even though Joseph was gifted, it was God's blessings that made him prosper, not just his abilities.

JOSEPH IN PRISON – CHAPTER 40

¹ Then it came about after these things, the cupbearer and the baker for the king of Egypt offended their lord, the king of Egypt. ² Pharaoh was furious with his two officials, the chief cupbearer and the chief baker. ³ So he put them in confinement in the house of the captain of the bodyguard, in the jail, the *same* place where Joseph was imprisoned. ⁴ The captain of the bodyguard put Joseph in charge of them, and he took care of them; and they were in confinement for some time.

- Genesis 40:1-4

These men were officers in the king's court:

- The cup bearer is responsible for vineyards, wine and service, and also protects against poisoning.
- The baker is responsible for food preparation and service as well as protection.

The fact that they were imprisoned and one subsequently executed may seem that they were involved in some sort of conspiracy (possibly assassination). While an investigation is pending to find out which one is really guilty, both were imprisoned.

The fact that Joseph served and saw to their needs says that they were well treated while the investigation went on.

⁵ Then the cupbearer and the baker for the king of Egypt, who were confined in jail, both had a dream the same night, each man with his *own* dream *and* each dream with its *own* interpretation. ⁶ When Joseph came to them in the morning and observed them, behold, they were dejected. ⁷ He asked Pharaoh's officials who were with him in confinement in his master's house, "Why are your faces so sad today?" ⁸ Then they said to him, "We have had a dream and there is no one to interpret it." Then Joseph said to them, "Do not interpretations belong to God? Tell *it* to me, please."

Joseph had much experience with dreams and was especially concerned regarding the dreams which they had which troubled them so much. He declares that God is the interpreter of dreams (because dreams are often about the future and God controls the future). From this we also learn that Joseph was aware of his own ability to interpret dreams given to him by God.

⁹ So the chief cupbearer told his dream to Joseph, and said to him, "In my dream, behold, *there was* a vine in front of me; ¹⁰ and on the vine *were* three branches. And as it was budding,

its blossoms came out, *and* its clusters produced ripe grapes. ¹¹ Now Pharaoh's cup was in my hand; so I took the grapes and squeezed them into Pharaoh's cup, and I put the cup into Pharaoh's hand." ¹² Then Joseph said to him, "This is the interpretation of it: the three branches are three days; ¹³ within three more days Pharaoh will lift up your head and restore you to your office; and you will put Pharaoh's cup into his hand according to your former custom when you were his cupbearer. ¹⁴ Only keep me in mind when it goes well with you, and please do me a kindness by mentioning me to Pharaoh and get me out of this house. ¹⁵ For I was in fact kidnapped from the land of the Hebrews, and even here I have done nothing that they should have put me into the dungeon."

The butler's dream is interpreted as a sign that in three days he would be freed and restored. The fact that the branches gave grapes which he immediately presented to the king showed that there was no tampering with the wine before it got to the Pharaoh.

The official is relieved and as a fellow innocent prisoner, Joseph asks him to use his influence to get him out of jail when he is released.

¹⁶ When the chief baker saw that he had interpreted favorably, he said to Joseph, "I also *saw* in my dream, and behold, *there were* three baskets of white bread on my head; ¹⁷ and in the top basket *there were* some of all sorts of baked food for Pharaoh, and the birds were eating them out of the basket on my head." ¹⁸ Then Joseph answered and said, "This is its interpretation: the three baskets are three days; ¹⁹ within three more days Pharaoh will lift up your head from you and will hang you on a tree, and the birds will eat your flesh off you."

The baker, encouraged by the favorable interpretation of the butler reveals his dream to Joseph. His dream holds the clues to his downfall. There is no sequence where the preparation of the food and service to the king are linked without interruption. This suggests that anyone could have put the baked goods together. The fact that the birds come to eat

some of the food says that the king did not get everything that was intended for him.

The dream, if a reflection of the baker's work, showed that he failed to guarantee the purity of the food and failed to protect it from its source to its destination. Joseph interprets the dream and gives the bad news to the baker along with the fact that all of this will take place in three days. Here is where God's power is seen in his ability not just to give meaning to images but to be specific about future events.

²⁰ Thus it came about on the third day, *which was* Pharaoh's birthday, that he made a feast for all his servants; and he lifted up the head of the chief cupbearer and the head of the chief baker among his servants. ²¹ He restored the chief cupbearer to his office, and he put the cup into Pharaoh's hand; ²² but he hanged the chief baker, just as Joseph had interpreted to them. ²³ Yet the chief cupbearer did not remember Joseph, but forgot him.

The king's birthday along with the attending feast (birthday parties are an old custom) was an ideal opportunity to announce the results of his investigation. With all the servants present, the king could make a good object lesson about the consequences of disloyalty or poor service. The butler is restored and immediately takes up his former position, but the baker as Joseph predicted, is convicted and sentenced to die.

This should have impressed the butler greatly but because of his new duties and perhaps the fear of competition from such a gifted man, he forgot about Joseph and his promise to him.

In Genesis 41 we find out that another two years goes by as Joseph languishes in prison before the butler remembers him and speaks to the Pharaoh on his behalf.

LESSONS

1. Your boss is watching you

If you want to know what kind of Christian you are, ask your boss because he/she is always watching you. Joseph provided a tremendous witness for his faith to his slave masters because they in their role as taskmasters naturally observed not only **what** he did but **how** he did it.

It should be quite evident to our superiors that we are Christians because of the quality of our work and our attitude. Bosses usually like to hire Christians because they know that there is something different and better in Christian employees, and they are blessed because of them.

If you cannot convince your boss that you are a Christian, you will have a hard time convincing anyone else.

2. Run from temptation

Joseph was young, ambitious and thought he could handle anything (he had survived a kidnapping)! Satan is smarter and stronger than we are by ourselves – when you hear or see a poisonous snake, you do not tease it or play with it, you run away. Joseph could not run but he could have asked God for help; he did not and the evil of others overwhelmed him and hurt him.

Sometimes we can avoid sin but we need help to avoid the schemes and attacks of others against us. A wise man runs away not only from personal temptation, but runs away from the appearance and the occasion of sin so that he can avoid it touching him, even indirectly.

3. God is a slow cook

The best food is usually cooked slowly to preserve the flavor and not burn or dry up the ingredients. God is a slow cook because He takes all the time necessary to prepare people for certain works, service, or ministry. Joseph was seventeen when sold into slavery; he was thirty years old when made the head of Pharaoh's courts.

Thirteen years as a slave in Potiphar's house and prison. It may have seemed like wasted time for this young, intelligent and talented man to spend thirteen years as a slave and a prisoner. But if your life is dedicated to God and His service, there is no wasted time, He uses every moment to either:

- Perfect your holy character
- Prepare you for a specific ministry
- Point you towards a person

God gives back the wasted years here and promises unlimited time in heaven if we submit our time to Him and His purpose now.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Discuss how the environment of ancient Egypt enabled Joseph to fulfill God's will.
2. Summarize how Joseph came to be the steward of Potiphar's household with emphasis on Joseph's response to the events.
3. Summarize Joseph's time in prison and answer the following questions:
 - Why would God not release Joseph from jail immediately?
 - How can we use Joseph's example to continue to serve God in times of trial?
 - What can we do if we fail in our faithfulness during a hard situation?
4. How can you use this lesson to grow spiritually and help others come into a relationship with Jesus?

45.

From Prison to Prince

GENESIS 41:1-57

We left Joseph in Potiphar's jail wrongly accused of having attempted to rape the chief official's wife. He rises to an important position in the jail and while there uses his special gifts of interpretation to explain the dreams of two high officials in jail pending an investigation. His interpretations are realized and one of the officials is restored and the other one is executed. The final scene sees him asking the freed official to help him get out of prison when he returns to the palace but he forgets and Joseph remains in jail for another two years.

We will now look at the events that take Joseph out of jail and propel him to a leadership position over the entire nation.

PHARAOH'S DREAM – CHAPTER 41

¹ Now it happened at the end of two full years that Pharaoh had a dream, and behold, he was standing by the Nile. ² And lo, from the Nile there came up seven cows, sleek and fat; and they grazed in the marsh grass. ³ Then behold, seven other cows came up after them from the Nile, ugly and gaunt, and they stood by the other cows on the bank of the Nile. ⁴ The ugly and gaunt cows ate up the seven sleek and fat cows. Then Pharaoh awoke. ⁵ He fell asleep and dreamed a second time; and behold, seven ears of grain came up on a single stalk, plump and good. ⁶ Then behold, seven ears, thin and scorched

by the east wind, sprouted up after them. ⁷ The thin ears swallowed up the seven plump and full ears. Then Pharaoh awoke, and behold, it was a dream.

- Genesis 41:1-7

Joseph's dreams seemed to come in pairs:

- His two dreams where his family bowed down before him.
- The two dreams by the butler and baker.
- The two dreams of the Pharaoh.

Cows were especially significant in Egypt because the cow was the emblem of *Isis* the goddess of fertility.

In the "*Book of the dead*" the main holy book of ancient Egypt, the god of vegetation *Orisis*, is represented by a bull accompanied by 7 cows. Cows, therefore, were a significant religious symbol in Egypt and a dream that had such startling imagery involving cows would have seemed significant.

Also, the dream about the crops had impact because Egypt, with its fertile lands near the Nile, was considered the granary to the ancient world. The dreams, although physically impossible, seemed so real that when he awoke the Pharaoh was relieved to see that he was only dreaming.

⁸ Now in the morning his spirit was troubled, so he sent and called for all the magicians of Egypt, and all its wise men. And Pharaoh told them his dreams, but there was no one who could interpret them to Pharaoh.

⁹ Then the chief cupbearer spoke to Pharaoh, saying, "I would make mention today of my own offenses. ¹⁰ Pharaoh was furious with his servants, and he put me in confinement in the house of the captain of the bodyguard, both me and the chief baker. ¹¹ We had a dream on the same night, he and I; each of us dreamed according to the interpretation of his own dream.

¹² Now a Hebrew youth was with us there, a servant of the captain of the bodyguard, and we related them to him, and he

interpreted our dreams for us. To each one he interpreted according to his own dream. ¹³ And just as he interpreted for us, so it happened; he restored me in my office, but he hanged him."

In his dreams the two symbols of Egypt's religious and economic wealth were destroyed and this troubled him.

- The magicians and fortune tellers of Egypt had great powers (as Moses found out later).
- God's servants demonstrate power given to them by God in order to create faith and praise to God.
- Satan also has power although it is limited by God (i.e. the things that happened to Job).
- His servants exercise certain powers in order to draw people away from faith in God.
- Satan had the power to give all the kingdoms to Jesus. How many have given their souls in exchange for success or rulership in this world.
- Many exercise occult power as did these ancient magicians.

We do not deny that strange and occult power exists, we simply say that it does not come from God and that it is not greater than God's. This is quite evident in this passage as the magicians and fortune tellers try to interpret the important dreams of the Pharaoh. These people were the court advisors who guided the king in much of the affairs of state. They realized the significance of the dream but could not conjure up a satisfying answer as to what they meant.

At this point the butler remembers Joseph and his remarkable and concise interpretation of the dreams they had in prison. At this point they have nothing to lose and the butler is at no risk in making the suggestion.

JOSEPH AND PHARAOH

¹⁴ Then Pharaoh sent and called for Joseph, and they hurriedly brought him out of the dungeon; and when he had shaved himself and changed his clothes, he came to Pharaoh.

¹⁵ Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I have had a dream, but no one can interpret it; and I have heard it said about you, that when you hear a dream you can interpret it." ¹⁶ Joseph then answered Pharaoh, saying, "It is not in me; God will give Pharaoh a favorable answer."

The Egyptians were very particular about cleanliness, only allowing their beards to grow in times of mourning. So Joseph is summoned from prison and quickly cleaned up in preparation for his appearance before one of the most powerful leaders in the world at that time.

The Pharaoh lays before him the problem of the dream and the inability of the magicians to interpret. This could have been a great opportunity for Joseph to:

- Be proud and flattered by this attention.
- Try to bargain his way out of jail.
- Exchange his power for financial reward.

His thirteen years in captivity had taught him patience, restraint, and humility.

- He immediately acknowledged that he had no power except by God.
- He made no conditions for the interpretation.
- He assured Pharaoh that the situation although difficult, would end in peace.

In the past, Joseph had used his gift to try to dominate and elevate himself in front of his brothers, but now after the painful lessons he had learned,

he managed to act in a restrained and gracious way while in control in the king's court.

In the next verses (17 to 24), the king simply repeats his dream to Joseph for his interpretation. He adds some details (like the thin cattle were in worse shape after eating the seven fat ones). He also explains how the magicians were helpless in trying to explain the dreams.

This acknowledgement suggests that the king was not only afraid of the problems that the dreams foretold but was not equipped to handle a national crisis.

²⁵ Now Joseph said to Pharaoh, "Pharaoh's dreams are one and the same; God has told to Pharaoh what He is about to do.

²⁶ The seven good cows are seven years; and the seven good ears are seven years; the dreams are one and the same. ²⁷ The seven lean and ugly cows that came up after them are seven years, and the seven thin ears scorched by the east wind will be seven years of famine. ²⁸ It is as I have spoken to Pharaoh: God has shown to Pharaoh what He is about to do. ²⁹ Behold, seven years of great abundance are coming in all the land of Egypt; ³⁰ and after them seven years of famine will come, and all the abundance will be forgotten in the land of Egypt, and the famine will ravage the land. ³¹ So the abundance will be unknown in the land because of that subsequent famine; for it will be very severe. ³² Now as for the repeating of the dream to Pharaoh twice, it means that the matter is determined by God, and God will quickly bring it about.

Joseph explains the significance of the numbers.

- Two dreams a sure confirmation that God is sending the dream.
- 7 cows, 7 ears represent years of good and bad.

The interpretation is so natural, so obvious that it is accepted by all who hear it.

Some interesting notes about the use of God's name by Joseph:

- Joseph attributes the dreams and interpretations 4 times in these passages.
- Whenever he refers to God in speaking to the Egyptians he uses the term "Elohim" which means mighty Creator and Sovereign King – a term which the Egyptians could relate to.
- Whenever the writer refers to God and Joseph in their relationship with one another he uses the term "Jehovah" which means "Lord".

The dream thus interpreted and accepted by the Pharaoh and the magicians as well.

³³ Now let Pharaoh look for a man discerning and wise, and set him over the land of Egypt. ³⁴ Let Pharaoh take action to appoint overseers in charge of the land, and let him exact a fifth of the produce of the land of Egypt in the seven years of abundance. ³⁵ Then let them gather all the food of these good years that are coming, and store up the grain for food in the cities under Pharaoh's authority, and let them guard it. ³⁶ Let the food become as a reserve for the land for the seven years of famine which will occur in the land of Egypt, so that the land will not perish during the famine."

God not only provides the interpretation but also a plan of action through the mouth of Joseph.

- Find a worthy administrator.
- Appoint officers to collect a special tax - 20%.
- Build storage facilities to store the 20% of food bought with tax or collected as tax into storage.

The plan would avoid the situation where the responsibility over life and death of everyone would reside on a single person (the king) and would allow provisions and distribution for the future.

There is no reason to think that Joseph is thinking of himself here. He is continuing to give God's message following the interpretation.

JOSEPH THE CHIEF OFFICIAL

³⁷ Now the proposal seemed good to Pharaoh and to all his servants.

³⁸ Then Pharaoh said to his servants, "Can we find a man like this, in whom is a divine spirit?" ³⁹ So Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Since God has informed you of all this, there is no one so discerning and wise as you are. ⁴⁰ You shall be over my house, and according to your command all my people shall do homage; only in the throne I will be greater than you."

⁴¹ Pharaoh said to Joseph, "See, I have set you over all the land of Egypt." ⁴² Then Pharaoh took off his signet ring from his hand and put it on Joseph's hand, and clothed him in garments of fine linen and put the gold necklace around his neck. ⁴³ He had him ride in his second chariot; and they proclaimed before him, "Bow the knee!" And he set him over all the land of Egypt. ⁴⁴ Moreover, Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Though I am Pharaoh, yet without your permission no one shall raise his hand or foot in all the land of Egypt." ⁴⁵ Then Pharaoh named Joseph Zaphenath-paneah; and he gave him Asenath, the daughter of Potiphera priest of On, as his wife. And Joseph went forth over the land of Egypt.

Pharaoh and his advisors recognize that Joseph is the right person for this job because they recognize the Spirit of God in him. The way that he had revealed the dreams not only provided an interpretation but his humble, poised and wise presentation had made an effective witness for God before the pagan king and his court. The king was consciously acting according to God's will by accepting the interpretation and selecting Joseph.

All the signs of power are now given to Joseph in order to elevate him in the eyes of the people so he could carry out his project.

- He needed their acceptance to collect taxes and food without confusion and resistance.
- He receives the appointment from the Pharaoh to the number two position without resistance from other counselors.
- He receives a signet ring as a seal for official documents.
- He receives a new and official wardrobe.
- He receives the gold chain and medal which signify his authority.
- They organize a royal procession as a way of introducing him and his new position to the people as the second in command.

The king also found him a wife since he was not an Egyptian; he needed this credibility through marriage to be accepted by the population.

His wife was a daughter of a pagan priest. We do not know of her conversion, only that Joseph had only her as wife and that their children were raised as believers in Jehovah.

⁴⁶ Now Joseph was thirty years old when he stood before Pharaoh, king of Egypt. And Joseph went out from the presence of Pharaoh and went through all the land of Egypt.

⁴⁷ During the seven years of plenty the land brought forth abundantly. ⁴⁸ So he gathered all the food of these seven years which occurred in the land of Egypt and placed the food in the cities; he placed in every city the food from its own surrounding fields. ⁴⁹ Thus Joseph stored up grain in great abundance like the sand of the sea, until he stopped measuring it, for it was beyond measure.

⁵⁰ Now before the year of famine came, two sons were born to Joseph, whom Asenath, the daughter of Potiphera priest of On, bore to him. ⁵¹ Joseph named the firstborn Manasseh, "For," he said, "God has made me forget all my trouble and all my father's household." ⁵² He named the second Ephraim, "For," he said, "God has made me fruitful in the land of my affliction."

Joseph immediately begins to survey the land and collect the food. To allay fears of the people, the storehouses are built in different cities. Joseph has two sons and gives them names signifying how he feels: Manasseh – forgetting, and Ephraim – doubly fruitful.

The years were bountiful to the point where it was difficult to keep track of everything that was in storage. From prison to prince, God had restored Joseph in a moment. This is a wonderful lesson for us when we are discouraged. God can restore us in a moment whether it be here on earth or in the "twinkling" of an eye when Jesus comes.

Joseph maintained his faith and when he was restored, it was as if the thirteen years in prison, the suffering, the loneliness and injustice had never occurred.

Heaven will be like this, we will remember people and places and events – but the greatness of our experience there will be such that it will make our experience here like it never happened.

⁵³ When the seven years of plenty which had been in the land of Egypt came to an end, ⁵⁴ and the seven years of famine began to come, just as Joseph had said, then there was famine in all the lands, but in all the land of Egypt there was bread.

⁵⁵ So when all the land of Egypt was famished, the people cried out to Pharaoh for bread; and Pharaoh said to all the Egyptians, "Go to Joseph; whatever he says to you, you shall do." ⁵⁶ When the famine was spread over all the face of the earth, then Joseph opened all the storehouses, and sold to the Egyptians; and the famine was severe in the land of Egypt.

⁵⁷ The people of all the earth came to Egypt to buy grain from Joseph, because the famine was severe in all the earth.

Just as Joseph had predicted, the famine arrived after the seven years of great abundance. This caused the people to look to Pharaoh for help, and he pointed them to Joseph who put his food bank operation into service. In addition to the food shortage in Egypt, there was also a food shortage in surrounding countries who would come to Egypt to buy food.

This, of course, was part of God's plan to eventually bring the children of Israel to Egypt for 400 long years.

LESSONS

1. We are on God's timetable

We would be a lot less stressed out if we understood that we are on God's timetable and not our own. He brings us into the world, He brings us out and He will order everything in-between if we let Him.

We get into more trouble and worry because we get ahead of Him by not seeking His will in prayer; we get behind Him by refusing to obey His will and going our own way. Joseph learned that God was working things out in His own time and that He could use Joseph when He was ready. Christians have eternity, this helps them to have patience in this world while God accomplishes His purposes using His own schedule.

2. God lifts up the humble and lowers the proud

In this story we see two men exercise humility. Joseph learned it through trials and suffering. His character changed and because of it God raised him from captivity and placed him at the right hand of the king.

The Pharaoh did not learn humility from suffering, his came from being confronted with the power of God in Joseph's work and character. The king could have rejected Joseph's interpretation, rejected this advice from a jailed foreigner, but he humbled himself and God saved his country and his crown.

God hates pride and the Bible says that He actively works against the proud, and conversely works for the humble. This should make us think twice about "puffing up" and being difficult when offended or contradicted, the meek will inherit the earth, the proud will inherit a rebuke and punishment.

3. Prosperity comes from God

These pagans were unaware that their prosperity came from the God of Joseph. They worshipped all kinds of fertility and nature gods and appealed to them for good harvests etc.

Worshipping a pagan "earth god" or the god of money, or the god of leisure, or the god of self-reliance, good government, humanism, central planning – are all the same things. The Lord, Jesus Christ, He is the one who prospers nations and "Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord" (Psalms 33:12).

One of our great roles and concerns as the church is that it is we, the believers, who many times stand between God and the nation for God's continued blessings. Without Joseph they would have been ruined. Without God's people everywhere, God's wrath would fall upon the nations.

We need to be especially prayerful that this country which has enjoyed tremendous prosperity in the last two centuries because of its faith, does not inherit God's wrath because of its unfaithfulness at the present time. We do well to pray and serve the Lord and hope He spares the nation because of the righteous that live within it.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What was the significance of the emblems in Pharaoh's dream from Genesis 41?
2. What is the significance of Pharaoh's wise men not being able to interpret the dream but Joseph being able to?
3. What is noticeable about how Joseph not only provides an interpretation of the dream but that he also provides a recommendation for a wise plan of action?
4. What preparation did Joseph have to begin in his service to Pharaoh and what can we learn from this about our service to God?
5. How does Joseph's rise from prison to the court of Pharaoh serve as an example for God's plans for us?
6. How can you use this lesson to grow spiritually and help others come into a relationship with Jesus?

46.

Confrontation

GENESIS 42:1-44:34

We are nearing the end of our study on Genesis with the transitional story of Joseph. Aside from the up-close view of this man and his response to trials and suffering as well as incredible success and blessings, this story also serves as a bridge linking the movement of Jacob's family from Canaan to Egypt.

So far, we have seen Joseph wrongly accused and imprisoned and then released in order to give dream interpretations to the Pharaoh. The Pharaoh's dreams predicted that Egypt would have a cycle of seven abundant years followed by seven years of famine.

As his reward for correctly interpreting the dreams, the king makes Joseph second in command and charges him to carry out the plan to establish a system of storage plants to prepare for the famine during the years of plenty.

In the next few chapters, we will read the story of Joseph's confrontation with his brothers as they, during the period of famine, journey to Egypt to purchase the grain stored there by Joseph.

FIRST TRIP TO EGYPT – CHAPTER 42

The scene reverts back to Canaan with Jacob and the brothers. Twenty years goes by since the deception, thirteen in Potiphar's house and seven years supervising the grain storage. Jacob is still alive and leading his

family, and the ten brothers remain with their awful secret of twenty years.

¹ Now Jacob saw that there was grain in Egypt, and Jacob said to his sons, "Why are you staring at one another?" ² He said, "Behold, I have heard that there is grain in Egypt; go down there and buy *some* for us from that place, so that we may live and not die." ³ Then ten brothers of Joseph went down to buy grain from Egypt. ⁴ But Jacob did not send Joseph's brother Benjamin with his brothers, for he said, "I am afraid that harm may befall him."

- Genesis 42:1-4

The famine spreads beyond Egypt to where Jacob and his sons are living in Canaan. Others were going down to buy grain, but Jacob's sons were reluctant to head towards Egypt. They were afraid of going to where they had sent Joseph. Maybe they would meet him or meet some kind of similar fate. Jacob pushes them to go (they are not slaves who would not be received by the Egyptians) but he does not send Benjamin his youngest.

The last time he sent one of Rachel's sons, he disappeared, and he is not going to take any chances with his only remaining child of the woman he loved first.

⁵ So the sons of Israel came to buy grain among those who were coming, for the famine was in the land of Canaan *also*.

⁶ Now Joseph was the ruler over the land; he was the one who sold to all the people of the land. And Joseph's brothers came and bowed down to him with *their* faces to the ground.

⁷ When Joseph saw his brothers he recognized them, but he disguised himself to them and spoke to them harshly. And he said to them, "Where have you come from?" And they said, "From the land of Canaan, to buy food."

⁸ But Joseph had recognized his brothers, although they did not recognize him. ⁹ Joseph remembered the dreams which he

had about them, and said to them, "You are spies; you have come to look at the undefended parts of our land."

There were many caravans on food buying missions and apparently each were screened by Joseph to make sure of two things:

- The amount sold would not undermine their own personal supplies.
- That foreign invaders, envious of Egypt's wealth, would not infiltrate in order to topple the country and seize the grain. Joseph acted like the chief of Immigration and CIA to screen all those coming and going.

The brothers do not recognize him (he left at 17, now he is about 37-38) and dressed like an Egyptian ruler. He recognizes (may have even anticipated) them as they come before him, but he purposefully uses an interpreter and speaks harshly to them to throw them off balance. He even accuses them of spying.

As they bowed to him in submission and respect, he is reminded of his dream as a young man and how God has made this dream a reality. It is not a question of vanity now, but an example of God's great power.

¹⁰ Then they said to him, "No, my lord, but your servants have come to buy food. ¹¹ We are all sons of one man; we are honest men, your servants are not spies." ¹² Yet he said to them, "No, but you have come to look at the undefended parts of our land!" ¹³ But they said, "Your servants are twelve brothers *in all*, the sons of one man in the land of Canaan; and behold, the youngest is with our father today, and one is no longer alive." ¹⁴ Joseph said to them, "It is as I said to you, you are spies; ¹⁵ by this you will be tested: by the life of Pharaoh, you shall not go from this place unless your youngest brother comes here! ¹⁶ Send one of you that he may get your brother, while you remain confined, that your words may be tested, whether there is truth in you. But if not, by the life of Pharaoh, surely

you are spies." ¹⁷ So he put them all together in prison for three days.

Joseph continues to elicit information from them by his accusations. Their defense is that they are all brothers (no king would send ten brothers to spy, especially his own sons). They also mention Benjamin at home (who was Joseph's full natural brother) as well as Joseph himself saying he was dead.

Joseph now knows that his brothers and father are alive and all the family is intact the way it was when he left it twenty years before. He continues to accuse them of spying and puts them in jail demanding that they produce their younger brother in order to prove their story. Their time in jail with the possibility of remaining there indefinitely may have seemed like a proper justice for what they had done to Joseph.

¹⁸ Now Joseph said to them on the third day, "Do this and live, for I fear God: ¹⁹ if you are honest men, let one of your brothers be confined in your prison; but as for *the rest of you*, go, carry grain for the famine of your households, ²⁰ and bring your youngest brother to me, so your words may be verified, and you will not die." And they did so. ²¹ Then they said to one another, "Truly we are guilty concerning our brother, because we saw the distress of his soul when he pleaded with us, yet we would not listen; therefore this distress has come upon us." ²² Reuben answered them, saying, "Did I not tell you, 'Do not sin against the boy'; and you would not listen? Now comes the reckoning for his blood." ²³ They did not know, however, that Joseph understood, for there was an interpreter between them.

An interesting episode develops as the brothers are released from prison and Joseph requires only one of them to remain as hostage. They discuss their sin against Joseph thinking that God was now punishing them for it in an appropriate way. (This is the only time in Genesis where sinners acknowledge the guilt and responsibility of their sins.)

Joseph can understand their conversations but they don't realize this because he spoke through an interpreter. Reuben defends some of his actions but says that this is God's punishment which they deserve. They can go but must leave one behind, if they return they must bring Benjamin with them.

²⁴ He turned away from them and wept. But when he returned to them and spoke to them, he took Simeon from them and bound him before their eyes. ²⁵ Then Joseph gave orders to fill their bags with grain and to restore every man's money in his sack, and to give them provisions for the journey. And thus it was done for them.

²⁶ So they loaded their donkeys with their grain and departed from there.

Joseph overhears their acknowledgement of sin and resignation to punishment and is overcome with grief, joy and emotion bottled up for twenty years.

- Angry and resentful at their treatment
- Joy at seeing his family
- Relief that through their confession their souls would be spared by God

He keeps Simeon as hostage. Reuben was not responsible for the act as he tried to stop them. Simeon as second oldest and with a violent nature (he killed those who raped Dinah) was probably the leader in the affair. Keeping Simeon must have had an impact on the others and Simeon himself since he knew full well his responsibility in the affair.

²⁷ As one *of them* opened his sack to give his donkey fodder at the lodging place, he saw his money; and behold, it was in the mouth of his sack. ²⁸ Then he said to his brothers, "My money has been returned, and behold, it is even in my sack." And their hearts sank, and they *turned* trembling to one another, saying, "What is this that God has done to us?"

²⁹ When they came to their father Jacob in the land of Canaan, they told him all that had happened to them, saying, ³⁰ "The man, the lord of the land, spoke harshly with us, and took us for spies of the country. ³¹ But we said to him, 'We are honest men; we are not spies. ³² We are twelve brothers, sons of our father; one is no longer alive, and the youngest is with our father today in the land of Canaan.' ³³ The man, the lord of the land, said to us, 'By this I will know that you are honest men: leave one of your brothers with me and take *grain* for the famine of your households, and go. ³⁴ But bring your youngest brother to me that I may know that you are not spies, but honest men. I will give your brother to you, and you may trade in the land.'"

³⁵ Now it came about as they were emptying their sacks, that behold, every man's bundle of money *was* in his sack; and when they and their father saw their bundles of money, they were dismayed. ³⁶ Their father Jacob said to them, "You have bereaved me of my children: Joseph is no more, and Simeon is no more, and you would take Benjamin; all these things are against me." ³⁷ Then Reuben spoke to his father, saying, "You may put my two sons to death if I do not bring him *back* to you; put him in my care, and I will return him to you." ³⁸ But Jacob said, "My son shall not go down with you; for his brother is dead, and he alone is left. If harm should befall him on the journey you are taking, then you will bring my gray hair down to Sheol in sorrow."

At the beginning they only thought one bag of money was with their grain but upon returning home they discover that all the money was with the grain thus opening them up to theft charges when they returned. Of course, Joseph knew that they would return, not only for Simeon but he knew that the famine would go on and they would have to return or starve.

Jacob accuses them of losing two of his sons and declares that if he loses Benjamin too all will be lost. He, of course, is thinking also about God's promise and its fulfillment through his sons.

Reuben shows some character and leadership here by promising to bring back everyone safely on the heads of his children but Jacob refuses and the matter remains this way for a while.

Note that neither Jacob nor his sons go to God for help or direction in this matter but simply worry and blame each other and themselves for this predicament.

THE SECOND TRIP TO EGYPT – CHAPTER 43

Simeon languishes in an Egyptian jail and the family in Canaan is paralyzed by fear of what will happen to them if they return. Everything is in a stalemate until God breaks the tie.

¹ Now the famine was severe in the land. ² So it came about when they had finished eating the grain which they had brought from Egypt, that their father said to them, "Go back, buy us a little food." ³ Judah spoke to him, however, saying, "The man solemnly warned us, 'You shall not see my face unless your brother is with you.' ⁴ If you send our brother with us, we will go down and buy you food. ⁵ But if you do not send *him*, we will not go down; for the man said to us, 'You will not see my face unless your brother is with you.'" - Genesis 43:1-5

As Joseph predicted, the famine persevered and their hope of riding out the storm and their supplies does not work. They are out of food and must take action.

We note here the ascendancy of Judah into a leadership role in the family. Reuben had good intentions but was weak willed and fearful. Simeon was decisive but violent and hardhearted (refused to hear Joseph's appeal for mercy). Levi was violent and quick tempered. This left the opening for Judah to demonstrate caring and courageous leadership.

⁶ Then Israel said, "Why did you treat me so badly by telling the man whether you still had *another* brother?" ⁷ But they

said, "The man questioned particularly about us and our relatives, saying, 'Is your father still alive? Have you *another* brother?' So we answered his questions. Could we possibly know that he would say, 'Bring your brother down?'" ⁸ Judah said to his father Israel, "Send the lad with me and we will arise and go, that we may live and not die, we as well as you and our little ones. ⁹ I myself will be surety for him; you may hold me responsible for him. If I do not bring him *back* to you and set him before you, then let me bear the blame before you forever. ¹⁰ For if we had not delayed, surely by now we could have returned twice."

Jacob argues with his sons some more but Judah finally convinces him of the need to return with Benjamin.

Note some changes: the Bible begins to refer to Jacob as Israel again. Not since the death of Joseph and Jacob's depression and loss of faith had he been referred to by this God given name. Now that his faith is reviving and he is forced to trust in God, he is called by his divinely appointed name.

Also note the great parallel between Judah's plan and offer and the ultimate plan and offer of the savior who would come through his genealogy. He was offering himself as a ransom for the safety of the others if anything went wrong. This prefigures Jesus' offer of Himself for everything that has gone wrong in our lives. The point is that if there was trouble one would have to pay and Judah was willing to offer himself as the payment to save his family. Because Jesus is perfect and eternal, His sacrifice pays for everyone and it pays forever.

¹¹ Then their father Israel said to them, "If *it must be* so, then do this: take some of the best products of the land in your bags, and carry down to the man as a present, a little balm and a little honey, aromatic gum and myrrh, pistachio nuts and almonds. ¹² Take double *the* money in your hand, and take back in your hand the money that was returned in the mouth of your sacks; perhaps it was a mistake. ¹³ Take your brother also, and arise, return to the man; ¹⁴ and may God Almighty

grant you compassion in the sight of the man, so that he will release to you your other brother and Benjamin. And as for me, if I am bereaved of my children, I am bereaved."

Israel's faith is now kindled again: he prepares gifts to appease the Egyptian like he did for Esau; he doubles the money to pay back what they owed.

- They sold Joseph for 20 pieces of silver.
- They returned to Egypt with 20 bundles of silver (two times ten brothers).

Israel accepts the fact that the matter is now in God's hands. Through this experience God is ministering to everyone in the family concerning trust, repentance, leadership, and faith.

Then follows a long section describing their (3-week trip) return and reunion with Joseph (verses 15-23). They still do not know who he is but when Joseph sees Benjamin, he is assured that a reconciliation is possible because they were not lying about his brother.

The brothers are invited to eat with Joseph and Simeon who has been released. They are still suspicious thinking that Joseph just wants to lure them into a trap in order to rob them.

There is also a section that describes how Joseph's servant tells them that their God had placed the money in their sacks and there was nothing to worry about.

This shows that Joseph must have converted the slave but the brothers were so fearful and confused that they did not notice it.

²⁴ Then the man brought the men into Joseph's house and gave them water, and they washed their feet; and he gave their donkeys fodder. ²⁵ So they prepared the present for Joseph's coming at noon; for they had heard that they were to eat a meal there.

²⁶ When Joseph came home, they brought into the house to him the present which was in their hand and bowed to the ground before him. ²⁷ Then he asked them about their welfare, and said, "Is your old father well, of whom you spoke? Is he still alive?" ²⁸ They said, "Your servant our father is well; he is still alive." They bowed down in homage. ²⁹ As he lifted his eyes and saw his brother Benjamin, his mother's son, he said, "Is this your youngest brother, of whom you spoke to me?" And he said, "May God be gracious to you, my son." ³⁰ Joseph hurried *out* for he was deeply stirred over his brother, and he sought *a place* to weep; and he entered his chamber and wept there. ³¹ Then he washed his face and came out; and he controlled himself and said, "Serve the meal."

Joseph gets more information from them and receives their gifts and respect but is overcome with emotion when he sees his own younger brother. After weeping alone, he begins the meal.

³² So they served him by himself, and them by themselves, and the Egyptians who ate with him by themselves, because the Egyptians could not eat bread with the Hebrews, for that is loathsome to the Egyptians. ³³ Now they were seated before him, the firstborn according to his birthright and the youngest according to his youth, and the men looked at one another in astonishment. ³⁴ He took portions to them from his own table, but Benjamin's portion was five times as much as any of theirs. So they feasted and drank freely with him.

Egyptians by custom were racially exclusive. There were three tables:

1. For the Hebrews
2. For the Egyptian guests
3. For Joseph himself

The odds of getting the eleven in the right numerical order were 40 million to one and so they were impressed. The extra food for Benjamin was not five times as much total food but five times more often was a

special food taster from Joseph's table was sent as a way of honoring a certain person. What had begun this entire affair was these brothers' jealousy and resentment of Joseph, their half-brother. Joseph, by honoring Benjamin, wanted to see if any of that resentment and jealousy remained.

The Bible says that they enjoyed their meal with happiness, and thus obviously were not bothered by Joseph's kindness to Benjamin.

LESSONS

1. Sin will find you out eventually

How could these men think that with God watching they could commit this sin and it would go unnoticed and unpunished? We need to avoid sin because it will always come to light; and when we do sin and we know we have, we need to deal with it by asking for forgiveness and doing the right thing before we are either embarrassed by it or judged for it. Note how their prosperity and faith diminished as they hid their sins for twenty years and were judged for it.

2. No pain, no gain

Bad is bad. Pain hurts. Death brings grief. But sometimes out of these comes some good. We should do all we can to alleviate pain, avoid evil and process our grief but sometimes the negative things are necessary to produce positive things. In the process of spiritual growth there is often a necessary period of pain in order to produce a new direction, a new dimension or a new element of spirituality in our lives.

3. Leaders carry the heavy end

Judah only gained leadership when he was willing to offer not his children (like Reuben) but himself. Leaders in every area of the church or home or business etc. are leaders because they are willing to make the tough decisions, do the dirty jobs, maintain a heavy load of responsibility while remaining faithful and loving. The reason we give them honor, prayer,

respect and obedience is because they are willing and able to carry a heavier load than we are.

4. Do all you can and leave the rest to God

Jacob gave a great example of a living, working faith. He used all of his available resources to influence the outcome but he recognized and accepted that the final outcome did rest with God. We need to find that balance, not simply wait for signs and coincidences to decide everything or think that we can do it all. Act in a way where we use our God-given talents and resources to do our best and trust that God will bless and use us to accomplish His purpose.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Summarize the events leading up to Jacob's sons traveling to Egypt and discuss observations from these events.
2. Why would Jacob hold back Benjamin when he sent his other sons to Egypt?
3. What is significant about Reuben's charge that they were being punished for their treatment of Joseph? (Genesis 42:21-23)
4. How does holding Simeon in prison as a hostage relate to Joseph's treatment?
5. Summarize the events that required Jacob's sons to return to Egypt and discuss their significance. (Genesis 42:39-44:34)
6. How can you use this lesson to grow spiritually and help others come into a relationship with Jesus?

47.

Reunion and Reconciliation

GENESIS 45:1-46:27

We are in the last phase of the story concerning Joseph in Egypt and the reunion with his family that he has not seen for over twenty years. So far, we have seen that a great famine predicted by Joseph has brought even his own family to Egypt in search for food. Joseph, as second in command, was screening all foreigners and discovered his long lost brothers coming before him to buy grain. He does not reveal himself right away but instead sets in motion a plan to force his brothers to bring back his younger brother. He does this by accusing them of being spies and keeping one of them as hostage until they return with their younger brother as proof that they are innocent.

In this last scene Genesis describes the second visit to Egypt by the brothers who, along with their father's reluctant permission, bring Joseph's younger brother, Benjamin. Once they reach Joseph he treats them to a fine meal and honors them in his home. This sets the scene for the reunion of these estranged brothers as Joseph reveals his true identity.

JOSEPH REVEALS HIMSELF – CHAPTER 45

Joseph had been testing these men to see if there had been any changes in them.

- If they were the same selfish, godless, violent men, he could have them executed and save his younger brother.
- If they had changed, he could reveal himself and hope not only for a reunion but also for a reconciliation.

What he finds out is that they have changed:

- They were united among themselves.
- They were ready to sacrifice for one another (Judah ready to die).
- They were ready to admit their sin and accept God's punishment.
- They no longer bore any jealousy towards their half-brother but rejoiced at his favor at the hand of this Egyptian officer.

Because of these things Joseph could no longer contain his emotion and need to reveal himself.

¹ Then Joseph could not control himself before all those who stood by him, and he cried, "Have everyone go out from me." So there was no man with him when Joseph made himself known to his brothers. ² He wept so loudly that the Egyptians heard *it*, and the household of Pharaoh heard *of it*. ³ Then Joseph said to his brothers, "I am Joseph! Is my father still alive?" But his brothers could not answer him, for they were dismayed at his presence.

⁴ Then Joseph said to his brothers, "Please come closer to me." And they came closer. And he said, "I am your brother Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt.

- Genesis 45:1-4

Even though he sends them out of the room, the servants hear (and later report to Pharaoh) the loud weeping of Joseph as he declares his true identity. The brothers are amazed (Hebrew word could be translated as troubled or terrified). If they felt guilty before, they truly feel bad now, but Joseph tries to calm them by asking about his father.

It is interesting to note that if this reunion had not taken place, the family would have eventually been separated and assimilated among other nations. It was this turn of events that kept them together.

⁵ Now do not be grieved or angry with yourselves, because you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life.

⁶ For the famine *has been* in the land these two years, and there are still five years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvesting. ⁷ God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant in the earth, and to keep you alive by a great deliverance. ⁸ Now, therefore, it was not you who sent me here, but God; and He has made me a father to Pharaoh and lord of all his household and ruler over all the land of Egypt.

Joseph wants to do four things:

1. Ease their minds that he is no longer angry or wanting revenge on them for what they did.
2. He wants to tell them what has happened to him over the last twenty years. Not only is he in charge of this food project but he has become an advisor to the Pharaoh and an important official in Egypt.
3. He wants to give God the glory by showing them that all of this was permitted by God to happen in order to show how great God is and to show how much He cares for His chosen people in preserving them.
4. Joseph needs to help them prepare for the five remaining years of famine.

JOSEPH SENDS HIS BROTHERS HOME

⁹ Hurry and go up to my father, and say to him, "Thus says your son Joseph, "God has made me lord of all Egypt; come down to me, do not delay. ¹⁰ You shall live in the land of Goshen, and you shall be near me, you and your children and your children's children and your flocks and your herds and all that you have. ¹¹ There I will also provide for you, for there are still five years of famine *to come*, and you and your household and all that you have would be impoverished."
¹² Behold, your eyes see, and the eyes of my brother Benjamin see, that it is my mouth which is speaking to you. ¹³ Now you must tell my father of all my splendor in Egypt, and all that you have seen; and you must hurry and bring my father down here." ¹⁴ Then he fell on his brother Benjamin's neck and wept, and Benjamin wept on his neck. ¹⁵ He kissed all his brothers and wept on them, and afterward his brothers talked with him.

At this point Joseph shares with them the true urgency of the situation and tells them to bring his father and their families down with them. God had not permitted His people to leave Canaan before but Joseph is convincing them by God's great work that this was indeed God's will for them.

He eventually will settle them in the land of Goshen in Northeastern Egypt, a fertile region about 900 sq. miles in size. After the initial burst and then serious discussion about plans, there is a second wave of emotion as Joseph, beginning with his brother Benjamin, hugs and weeps with each of his brothers. Each (except Benjamin) is forgiven and each is reconciled in the arms of the other.

¹⁶ Now when the news was heard in Pharaoh's house that Joseph's brothers had come, it pleased Pharaoh and his servants. ¹⁷ Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Say to your brothers, 'Do this: load your beasts and go to the land of Canaan, ¹⁸ and take your father and your households and

come to me, and I will give you the best of the land of Egypt and you will eat the fat of the land.' ¹⁹ Now you are ordered, 'Do this: take wagons from the land of Egypt for your little ones and for your wives, and bring your father and come. ²⁰ Do not concern yourselves with your goods, for the best of all the land of Egypt is yours.'"

The king now learns of Joseph's family and offers his own approval on their immigration to Egypt. Joseph was the deliverer of Egypt and so the people along with the king and officials are eager to help relocate Joseph's family.

²¹ Then the sons of Israel did so; and Joseph gave them wagons according to the command of Pharaoh, and gave them provisions for the journey. ²² To each of them he gave changes of garments, but to Benjamin he gave three hundred *pieces of* silver and five changes of garments. ²³ To his father he sent as follows: ten donkeys loaded with the best things of Egypt, and ten female donkeys loaded with grain and bread and sustenance for his father on the journey. ²⁴ So he sent his brothers away, and as they departed, he said to them, "Do not quarrel on the journey."

Joseph provides them with goods and gifts to bring to Jacob. He gives even more to Benjamin and the brothers are not jealous. He tells them not to "fall out of the way" meaning not to be distracted or troubled after they leave.

²⁵ Then they went up from Egypt, and came to the land of Canaan to their father Jacob. ²⁶ They told him, saying, "Joseph is still alive, and indeed he is ruler over all the land of Egypt." But he was stunned, for he did not believe them. ²⁷ When they told him all the words of Joseph that he had spoken to them, and when he saw the wagons that Joseph had sent to carry him, the spirit of their father Jacob revived. ²⁸ Then Israel said, "It is enough; my son Joseph is still alive. I will go and see him before I die."

The brothers must have heeded Joseph's admonition because there is no comment made about their trip back home. Upon hearing the news, Jacob is overcome by emotion but eventually he believes what he thought was impossible, that his son was still alive.

The Bible does not say but in their attitude of repentance it may be that the brothers finally unburdened themselves of their story. Israel says "Enough!", he does not care about the details, he will see his son again and this is enough.

ISRAEL IN EGYPT – CHAPTER 46

All of his life Jacob has sought the Lord for the important decisions in his life. Even though Joseph has invited him and there is a great famine, God could end the famine and he could just go visit Joseph. Canaan is his home, the land that God has promised him and his future generations - and now he has to uproot and move everyone to an unknown land. He is overjoyed at finding Joseph but perplexed about leaving Canaan.

God's will is difficult to determine at times.

¹ So Israel set out with all that he had, and came to Beersheba, and offered sacrifices to the God of his father Isaac. ² God spoke to Israel in visions of the night and said, "Jacob, Jacob." And he said, "Here I am." ³ He said, "I am God, the God of your father; do not be afraid to go down to Egypt, for I will make you a great nation there. ⁴ I will go down with you to Egypt, and I will also surely bring you up again; and Joseph will close your eyes."

- Genesis 46:1-4

It seemed that all the circumstances and "open doors" kept pointing him to Egypt and so Jacob packed up along with all the families and headed for Egypt. He stopped along the way at Beersheba where he had lived with his father Isaac. It was the last stop along the way, the point of no return, before Egypt.

He again offers sacrifice and prayers and God once again speaks, blesses, and encourages Jacob by telling him that he can go down to Egypt and He will bless him there. In hindsight we can see some of the advantages for the Israelites to live in Egypt:

1. They would survive the famine.
2. They would be living in an advanced society and would learn many useful things for later on.
3. There was less danger of intermingling in Egypt than in Canaan. The Egyptians would not intermarry with shepherds and so the Israelites would be free to increase their people without pagan intermarriage.
4. Living in a foreign land would strengthen their bonds and force them to develop a particular culture to themselves.
5. They would be less likely to worship Egyptian gods and so the teachings of their patriarchs would remain intact.

⁵ Then Jacob arose from Beersheba; and the sons of Israel carried their father Jacob and their little ones and their wives in the wagons which Pharaoh had sent to carry him. ⁶ They took their livestock and their property, which they had acquired in the land of Canaan, and came to Egypt, Jacob and all his descendants with him: ⁷ his sons and his grandsons with him, his daughters and his granddaughters, and all his descendants he brought with him to Egypt.

Therefore, in a very general way the writer describes the migration of Israel, his family, and their possessions from Canaan to Egypt.

The next section (verses 8-25) begins the important task of listing the genealogies of each son as they left the land of Canaan. Later on, these records are used to determine who will serve at the tabernacle and where they will live in the land of promise. The lists go in order of wives with Leah's children listed first then her servant followed by Rachel and her servant. The sons, daughters and children are listed, even Joseph's sons (showing that the lists were compiled after this event took place).

²⁶ All the persons belonging to Jacob, who came to Egypt, his direct descendants, not including the wives of Jacob's sons, *were* sixty-six persons in all, ²⁷ and the sons of Joseph, who were born to him in Egypt were two; all the persons of the house of Jacob, who came to Egypt, *were* seventy.

The final tally that the writer gives here is that there were seventy people that came to Egypt. This does not represent the exact number counting all grandchildren etc., but is a representative number that includes the immediate family.

- 70 is a special number in Jewish history and theology (represents wholeness: $4+3 \times 10$ (world + God x perfection)).
- 70 elders - Numbers 11:16
- 70 years of captivity - II Chronicles 36:24
- 70 translators of Hebrew OT into Greek - Septuagint
- 70 members of the Sanhedrin
- 70 witnesses sent out by Christ - Luke 10:1

These seventy represent the founders of the Jewish society and culture who went into Egypt as a family and came out 400 years later as a nation.

LESSONS

1. You never know

You never know what or why God is testing you.

- Joseph did not know for thirteen years why what was happening, was happening.
- His brothers did not know why their lives were being put upside down - they thought they knew, but they were very surprised when they found out.

- Jacob did not know why he was losing his family, even his life at a time when God was supposed to bless him.

You never know why or for what reason God is testing you, but you are always happy when you pass the test. Be careful not to complain too loudly, not to lose faith too quickly, not to get mad at God too easily because you never know what He is going to do with you.

2. God will be there when you need Him

God planned and prepared twenty years ahead of time to supply what Jacob needed even before Jacob was aware that he would be needing something.

God knows the future, He knows the results of our decisions. He even tries to influence us to make good ones through His word and Spirit. He does not force us to make good choices, He allows us to experience the results of our bad choices, He also permits bad things to happen to us that we have no control over. But in all of this He plans and works in such a way to be there when we need Him and provide what we need when we reach the point of need.

Jesus says that our Father knows what we need before we ask Him, this is because He has been planning for our need long before we arrived at it - our asking is a sign of faith acknowledging this fact.

3. Always search for God's will before you decide

Jacob had many definite "signs" that God wanted him to go to Egypt. His problem was that this seemed to contradict God's earlier promise to give him the land of Canaan and instruction to stay there.

Jacob responded to the leading of the Lord with caution and prayer seeking the Lord's word and will to actually confirm this change in his life. Of course, he finally received it at Beersheba when God actually spoke to him.

We do not have God "audibly" speaking or appearing to us today but He still directs and speaks to us in particular ways so we can know His will.

1. His Word contains all we need for instruction, holy living and service - II Timothy 3:16; II Peter 1:3 - we need to consult it.
2. The church provides direction and encouragement through leadership example, and teachings. We need to ask elders, teachers, ministers, or experienced brethren when in doubt.
3. The Holy Spirit leads us through the Word, through His influence in our conscience and the opportunities we encounter in our daily lives.
 - God does work all things for good and the Holy Spirit is God who works these things out in our daily lives. Spend time in prayer and meditation to know His will.
4. Our judgment and experience used under God's influence helps us make wise and proper decisions. Use your best judgment and experience (parents, etc.).

When we accept the Lordship of Jesus Christ in our lives through repentance and baptism, He directs us through His word, His Spirit, His church as well as our own conscience and judgment, in order to make decisions that will be in concert with His will and His plan for our lives.

If we search for it, God will reveal His will for our lives in every area. He is pleased when we seek Him, and those who seek will find.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What indicators did Joseph see in his brothers that led him to feel he could reveal himself to them and how does this relate to our repentance?
2. What was Joseph's attitude and spirit towards his brothers, and what can we learn from this?
3. How do Joseph's brothers' reaction to Joseph mirror our reaction to God's judgment and how can we accept God's forgiveness to lessen our fears of judgment?
4. Outline the four things Joseph wanted by revealing his identity to his brothers. Which stands out to you as the most difficult and why?
5. Read Genesis 45:16-20. How does Pharaoh's recognition of Joseph's family and offer of everything they needed from his own belongings compare to God's recognition of us through Jesus and accepting us into His kingdom with all of our needs met?
6. What benefits would Jacob and his family realize from moving to Egypt?
7. List some observations about Joseph that show God working in his life to bring about God's will and what can we learn from this?
8. How can you use this lesson to grow spiritually and help others come into a relationship with Jesus?

48.

Family Reunion

GENESIS 46:28-48:22

In the previous chapter we witnessed the reconciliation of Joseph and his brothers after twenty years of separation, and a long and involved scheme to test their character and repentance.

The Bible also describes Jacob (Israel) as he departs from the land of his birth and promise in order to go to Egypt to be reunited with his son and avoid the destruction that the famine was bringing on the land. God appeared to him and renewed His promise to bless him and bring his family back one day. And so, the entire family goes to Egypt, and the portion of Abraham's history in the land of Canaan is closed for now.

This sets the scene for the final episode in this story – the meeting of Jacob and his long-lost son, and the settling of the family in Egypt.

JACOB AND JOSEPH MEET – 46:28-34

²⁸ Now he sent Judah before him to Joseph, to point out *the way* before him to Goshen; and they came into the land of Goshen. ²⁹ Joseph prepared his chariot and went up to Goshen to meet his father Israel; as soon as he appeared before him, he fell on his neck and wept on his neck a long time. ³⁰ Then Israel said to Joseph, "Now let me die, since I have seen your face, that you are still alive."

- Genesis 46:28-30

Judah is now the recognized leader of the family and is sent ahead to advise Joseph of his family's arrival. Jacob had been told to go to the land of Goshen (not where Joseph's headquarters were) but he was not sure where in this place he was to settle. When they meet it is a melting away of twenty-two years of sorrow and pain in the joy of seeing each other alive again.

³¹ Joseph said to his brothers and to his father's household, "I will go up and tell Pharaoh, and will say to him, 'My brothers and my father's household, who *were* in the land of Canaan, have come to me; ³² and the men are shepherds, for they have been keepers of livestock; and they have brought their flocks and their herds and all that they have.' ³³ When Pharaoh calls you and says, 'What is your occupation?' ³⁴ you shall say, 'Your servants have been keepers of livestock from our youth even until now, both we and our fathers,' that you may live in the land of Goshen; for every shepherd is loathsome to the Egyptians."

Now that the reunion has been achieved, the practical matter of where to live needs to be settled. The Pharaoh knew they were coming but the issue of where they would live was not yet confirmed.

Joseph instructs them to stress their occupation as shepherds for two reasons: this will emphasize their need to live in an area that can support their lifestyle; and Goshen was near and similar to Canaan.

The Egyptians hated shepherds and considered themselves superior. By noting this fact there would be an extra effort to isolate them so they would not inter-marry or be assimilated with the Egyptian population. This, of course, would work favorably into Joseph's (God's) plan to keep the family of Jacob separate from the Egyptian race as well.

JACOB AND THE PHARAOH – CHAPTER 47

¹ Then Joseph went in and told Pharaoh, and said, "My father and my brothers and their flocks and their herds and all that

they have, have come out of the land of Canaan; and behold, they are in the land of Goshen." ² He took five men from among his brothers and presented them to Pharaoh. ³ Then Pharaoh said to his brothers, "What is your occupation?" So they said to Pharaoh, "Your servants are shepherds, both we and our fathers." ⁴ They said to Pharaoh, "We have come to sojourn in the land, for there is no pasture for your servants' flocks, for the famine is severe in the land of Canaan. Now, therefore, please let your servants live in the land of Goshen." ⁵ Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Your father and your brothers have come to you. ⁶ The land of Egypt is at your disposal; settle your father and your brothers in the best of the land, let them live in the land of Goshen; and if you know any capable men among them, then put them in charge of my livestock."
- Genesis 47:1-6

At first, Joseph brings five of his brothers to make a formal introduction to the Pharaoh. Although he was a high official, he could not give land away to foreigners, the king had to approve any foreigners living in the land. The brothers explain their background and need for grazing land which will suit the Pharaoh well because Goshen was an isolated place and allowed him to grant Joseph's request without compromising Egyptian social standards.

Note that the brothers say that they have only to come to "sojourn" – this means to stay for a little while. The Pharaoh knows the famine is going to last for only a few more years and so the offer of hospitality will only be for a short while from his (and their) perspective. This meeting is agreeable so the king permits Joseph's request that they stay in the land of Goshen.

⁷ Then Joseph brought his father Jacob and presented him to Pharaoh; and Jacob blessed Pharaoh. ⁸ Pharaoh said to Jacob, "How many years have you lived?" ⁹ So Jacob said to Pharaoh, "The years of my sojourning are one hundred and thirty; few and unpleasant have been the years of my life, nor have they attained the years that my fathers lived during the days of

their sojourning." ¹⁰ And Jacob blessed Pharaoh, and went out from his presence.

The greatest ruler of the day meets the greatest servant of God of the day and it is interesting to note several things about what little of their conversation was preserved by Joseph:

- Pharaoh was wealthy and powerful but he recognized Jacob's spiritual superiority in allowing himself to be blessed twice by him.
- Pharaoh asked his age – such a common and polite question in a meeting of two strangers.

¹¹ So Joseph settled his father and his brothers and gave them a possession in the land of Egypt, in the best of the land, in the land of Rameses, as Pharaoh had ordered. ¹² Joseph provided his father and his brothers and all his father's household with food, according to their little ones.

They settled in the northeast section away from the bulk of the population which was in the south and west. They were near the Nile and so could eat fish. They also received their ration of food according to their number of children.

THE FAMINE CONTINUES – VS. 13-26

In verses 13-21, the text continues to describe the effects of the famine:

- The people ran out of money
- They traded their livestock for food
- They eventually trade their land

This set up a feudal system where everything belonged to the king and the people essentially worked for him. Some say that it was out of character for Joseph to enslave the people, but it was the people who

came to him with the idea. The alternative would have been mass starvation or anarchy.

Also, Joseph did not profit from this, only the king. It was to the king's advantage to keep the people alive in any way he could.

²² Only the land of the priests he did not buy, for the priests had an allotment from Pharaoh, and they lived off the allotment which Pharaoh gave them. Therefore, they did not sell their land. ²³ Then Joseph said to the people, "Behold, I have today bought you and your land for Pharaoh; now, *here* is seed for you, and you may sow the land. ²⁴ At the harvest you shall give a fifth to Pharaoh, and four-fifths shall be your own for seed of the field and for your food and for those of your households and as food for your little ones." ²⁵ So they said, "You have saved our lives! Let us find favor in the sight of my lord, and we will be Pharaoh's slaves." ²⁶ Joseph made it a statute concerning the land of Egypt *valid* to this day, that Pharaoh should have the fifth; only the land of the priests did not become Pharaoh's.

Here we read about some details concerning this arrangement between the king and the people:

- The priests were exempt by order of Pharaoh, not Joseph, from this. Egyptians had a state religion supported by the king.
- The people deeded over their lands with the condition that they were allowed to keep 80% of the produce.
- This amounted to a 20% tax which is not unreasonable considering the king provided the seed and food supplies during the famine.

The people were satisfied with the arrangement and it continued this way even into Moses' day 400 years later.

THE LAST DAYS OF JACOB

Now that the condition of the country has been described, the scene shifts back to Jacob and the events of his last days.

²⁷ Now Israel lived in the land of Egypt, in Goshen, and they acquired property in it and were fruitful and became very numerous. ²⁸ Jacob lived in the land of Egypt seventeen years; so the length of Jacob's life was one hundred and forty-seven years.

²⁹ When the time for Israel to die drew near, he called his son Joseph and said to him, "Please, if I have found favor in your sight, place now your hand under my thigh and deal with me in kindness and faithfulness. Please do not bury me in Egypt, ³⁰ but when I lie down with my fathers, you shall carry me out of Egypt and bury me in their burial place." And he said, "I will do as you have said." ³¹ He said, "Swear to me." So he swore to him. Then Israel bowed *in worship* at the head of the bed.

Nearing his death and wanting to settle his affairs, Jacob makes Joseph promise that they will bury him in Canaan, not in Egypt. The hand under the thigh is the same gesture as Abraham's servant made in promising to find a wife for Isaac.

Jacob had been promised that the land of Canaan would be his and against all evidence he continued to believe this and demonstrated it by wanting to be buried with his family there.

JACOB BLESSES JOSEPH'S SONS – CHAPTER 48

Jacob is in his last days and sends for his sons for final instructions to each of them. Joseph is the first he calls (even though the promise will not be carried through his family).

¹ Now it came about after these things that Joseph was told, "Behold, your father is sick." So he took his two sons Manasseh and Ephraim with him. ² When it was told to Jacob, "Behold, your son Joseph has come to you," Israel collected his strength and sat up in the bed. ³ Then Jacob said to Joseph, "God Almighty appeared to me at Luz in the land of Canaan and blessed me, ⁴ and He said to me, 'Behold, I will make you fruitful and numerous, and I will make you a company of peoples, and will give this land to your descendants after you for an everlasting possession.'

Jacob reviews with Joseph and his two sons the essence of his faith and the promise that God made to him. His whole life spent, Jacob recounts to his son what the essence of his life was about. It was about his encounter with God and the results of that encounter.

⁵ Now your two sons, who were born to you in the land of Egypt before I came to you in Egypt, are mine; Ephraim and Manasseh shall be mine, as Reuben and Simeon are. ⁶ But your offspring that have been born after them shall be yours; they shall be called by the names of their brothers in their inheritance. ⁷ Now as for me, when I came from Paddan, Rachel died, to my sorrow, in the land of Canaan on the journey, when there was still some distance to go to Ephrath; and I buried her there on the way to Ephrath (that is, Bethlehem)."

Jacob transfers the "firstborn" privileges from Reuben to Joseph for several reasons:

1. Reuben was born first chronologically but Jacob had intended to marry Rachel and was tricked into marrying Leah.
 - Had he been allowed to do so then Joseph would have indeed been his first-born son.
2. Reuben had sinned against his father by sleeping with his father's concubine and having a weak character.

- Joseph displayed spiritual depth and strong leadership ability necessary for a family leader.
3. God had foretold this event in Joseph's dreams and Jacob was complying with this instruction of God.
- The first born also had a double portion and so Jacob does this by giving each of Joseph's sons equal ranking among the brothers – just like Judah and Simeon. This would mean that when they returned to the land of Canaan, these two would each receive an equal portion of land (the double portion of the firstborn Joseph).

Jacob says that any other children of his would be assigned to the clans of their brethren (although the Bible says that Joseph didn't have any other children).

⁸ When Israel saw Joseph's sons, he said, "Who are these?"

⁹ Joseph said to his father, "They are my sons, whom God has given me here." So he said, "Bring them to me, please, that I may bless them." ¹⁰ Now the eyes of Israel were *so* dim from age *that* he could not see. Then Joseph brought them close to him, and he kissed them and embraced them. ¹¹ Israel said to Joseph, "I never expected to see your face, and behold, God has let me see your children as well." ¹² Then Joseph took them from his knees, and bowed with his face to the ground.

Joseph's sons were young men by this time and are made to approach their grandfather for a blessing. Joseph, even though a powerful ruler, gives a tremendous example of love and respect towards his father by bowing down before him in view of his own sons. His dream about his father and mother bowing to him is realized perhaps in the idea that they had to come to him for help.

¹³ Joseph took them both, Ephraim with his right hand toward Israel's left, and Manasseh with his left hand toward Israel's right, and brought them close to him. ¹⁴ But Israel stretched

out his right hand and laid it on the head of Ephraim, who was the younger, and his left hand on Manasseh's head, crossing his hands, although Manasseh was the firstborn. ¹⁵ He blessed Joseph, and said,

"The God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked,
The God who has been my shepherd all my life to this day,

¹⁶ The angel who has redeemed me from all evil,

Bless the lads;

And may my name live on in them,

And the names of my fathers Abraham and Isaac;

And may they grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth."

Jacob is almost blind and so Joseph brings his sons closer in order to receive a blessing. Manasseh, since he was older, towards his right hand and Ephraim the younger towards his left. Jacob switches hands to place his right on Ephraim and his left on Manasseh and begins to pronounce his blessing.

- At first it is a general one on Joseph recalling God's blessings on himself throughout his own life.
- First time God as "shepherd" or "Redeemer" is mentioned in the Bible.

He prays that they grow and be blessed in the way of their ancestors.

¹⁷ When Joseph saw that his father laid his right hand on Ephraim's head, it displeased him; and he grasped his father's hand to remove it from Ephraim's head to Manasseh's head.

¹⁸ Joseph said to his father, "Not so, my father, for this one is the firstborn. Place your right hand on his head." ¹⁹ But his father refused and said, "I know, my son, I know; he also will become a people and he also will be great. However, his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his descendants shall become a multitude of nations." ²⁰ He blessed them that day, saying,

"By you Israel will pronounce blessing, saying,

'May God make you like Ephraim and Manasseh!'"
Thus he put Ephraim before Manasseh.

Jacob now pronounces a blessing on the younger son over the older one and Joseph responds. He thinks the old man is confused but Jacob assures him that he knows what he is doing and that indeed the younger one will have pre-eminence in the future.

²¹ Then Israel said to Joseph, "Behold, I am about to die, but God will be with you, and bring you back to the land of your fathers. ²² I give you one portion more than your brothers, which I took from the hand of the Amorite with my sword and my bow."

An interesting postscript here as Jacob gives to Joseph a special gift in his will. There is no reference to it anywhere else but it seems that Jacob had taken a large piece of land through victory in battle against the Amorites. He tells Joseph that he can have a double portion of this piece of land situated in Canaan. A promise for the future.

In the next section Jacob will pronounce a blessing on each of his other sons.

LESSONS

1. God's ways are not our ways

They came to Egypt thinking they were going to spend a few years, ride out the famine and go home. They remained 4 centuries. Their way seemed logical, convenient, even a way to guarantee God's plan but it was not God's way. Our way is not God's way because we cannot see the "big" picture, how things will fall in the next four centuries. Our way is not His way because our choices are based on self-interest and limited intelligence – His based on perfect love and perfect knowledge. We need to trust God even when it does not make sense because His way is not our way.

2. God can prosper you regardless of the circumstances

Joseph was in prison but God raised him to a high position. Jacob was losing his family and possibly his life and through this God reunited him with his son and allowed him to see his grandsons. God's ability to bless us is not limited by our weaknesses, our sins, difficult circumstances or even the sins of evil men. God blesses because He is good, and because He is able. Do not give up on prayer for a blessing just because the circumstances are against it; faith believes and prays for a "yes" from God, even when all the circumstances seem to be saying "no."

3. God chooses for spiritual reasons

Note how many older sons were passed over by God in favor of younger ones.

- Isaac over Ishmael
- Jacob over Esau
- Joseph over Reuben
- Ephraim over Manasseh
- David over all of his brothers (youngest)

God did not choose them for great service because they were young, He did so because they were more spiritually mature than their older brothers. God looks at your heart to judge your value for leadership, responsibility and stewardship, all things that lead to great blessings. In the kingdom, becoming as a child in purity, trust, flexibility, simple joy and willingness to help is necessary for God to appoint you as leader, chief or head of His people.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Summarize the reunion of Jacob and Joseph and answer the following questions:
 - What is the significance of Jacob's statement in verse 30?
 - What is significant about Jacob's family as shepherds in Egypt?
2. What is significant about the use of the word, "sojourn" in Genesis 47:4?
3. Summarize the interaction between Jacob and Pharaoh from Genesis 47:7-10 and discuss its significance.
4. What is significant about how the famine continuing and its impact on the world of the day, and how does this relate to Paul's teachings in Romans 13?
5. Why would Jacob insist on his body being returned to Canaan?
6. Summarize Jacob's blessings on his sons from Genesis 48.
7. How can you use this lesson to grow spiritually and help others come into a relationship with Jesus?

49.

Jacob's Prophecies

GENESIS 49:1-50:26

Two significant meetings took place in the previous chapter:

1. The meeting between Joseph and Jacob which completed the reunification of their family and guaranteed the continuation of the promise made to Abraham and Isaac by God in the past.
2. The meeting between Jacob and the Pharaoh. The greatest living servant of God meets the greatest king of the time.

We also witnessed the blessing of Joseph's sons which was to be significant later on because each son was to have an equal standing with Joseph's brothers, a demonstration that he received the double portion of the first born.

In this final scene we will see Jacob going on to bless and prophecy concerning each one of his sons.

PROPHECY CONCERNING THE TRIBES – CHAPTER 49

Jacob is near death and calls his other sons in order to prophecy concerning their future. As a father he has insight into their character and patterns of behavior; as a servant of God he can also prophecy about their future. He gives each one information about their future generations as a way of encouraging or warning for correction and change. He begins with the eldest.

1. Reuben

³ "Reuben, you are my firstborn;
My might and the beginning of my strength,
Preeminent in dignity and preeminent in power.
⁴ "Uncontrolled as water, you shall not have preeminence,
Because you went up to your father's bed;
Then you defiled *it*—he went up to my couch.
- Genesis 49:3-4

He confirms what is true about firstborns in general, that they are a joy and testimony to a man's youth and strength. However, Reuben, because of his sin with Bilhah, is told that he will not amount to much.

This prophecy is fulfilled in the future:

- The tribe of Reuben never produced a great leader.
- The Reubenites were first to settle, not wanting to cross the Jordan with the others.
- They erected a false place of worship (Joshua 22:10).
- In the days of Deborah, they failed to answer the call to take arms and defend the nation (Judges 5:15).

So Jacob's prophecy about Reuben not amounting to much was amply fulfilled.

2. Simeon and Levi

⁵ "Simeon and Levi are brothers;
Their swords are implements of violence.
⁶ "Let my soul not enter into their council;
Let not my glory be united with their assembly;
Because in their anger they slew men,
And in their self-will they lamed oxen.

⁷ "Cursed be their anger, for it is fierce;
And their wrath, for it is cruel.
I will disperse them in Jacob,
And scatter them in Israel.

These are mentioned together because they were close and always operated together. Jacob disassociates himself from their violent acts and motives. They killed the Shechemites and destroyed their property in wanton cruelty and violence. He then says that he will split them up. Two bad boys who get into trouble together need to be separated.

Later we learn that they were divided and did not form a union between their two tribes.

- Simeon was absorbed by Judah and eventually scattered outside of Israel. Very little is heard of them after Solomon's reign.
- Levi, of course, was the tribe that Moses and Aaron came from and the priests and temple servants were assigned from this tribe.
- They were not given land but dwelt in cities given to them.

It seems that the tribe of Levi put their natural zeal to better use because they became very enthusiastic defenders of the Law and were honored by serving as priests.

3. Judah

⁸ "Judah, your brothers shall praise you;
Your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies;
Your father's sons shall bow down to you.
⁹ "Judah is a lion's whelp;
From the prey, my son, you have gone up.
He couches, he lies down as a lion,
And as a lion, who dares rouse him up?
¹⁰ "The scepter shall not depart from Judah,

Nor the ruler's staff from between his feet,
Until Shiloh comes,
And to him *shall be* the obedience of the peoples.
¹¹ "He ties *his* foal to the vine,
And his donkey's colt to the choice vine;
He washes his garments in wine,
And his robes in the blood of grapes.
¹² "His eyes are dull from wine,
And his teeth white from milk.

By the time Jacob gets to Judah, he has some good things to say. His name means "praise" and in the future his brothers would praise him for several reasons:

- He would subdue his enemies.
- He would assume the mantle of leadership normally held by the firstborn. Joseph received the double portion and Judah received leadership.
- He would be as secure as a mature lion in its den.
- He did receive the scepter of leadership but not until David (who was from the tribe of Judah) became king 640 years later. All previous leaders were from other tribes but once David became king, Judah was the dominant tribe from then on.

He says that the "scepter", the rule or role of dominance and rulership, would not pass from Judah until Shiloh came. Historically this was proven to be true. Although Israel was attacked and deported throughout the years, Judah remained the dominant tribe. It was Judah and Benjamin that came back from captivity and by the time of Jesus, the Israelite nation became synonymous with the tribe of Judah because all the other tribes had been assimilated or destroyed. The term "Jew" comes from the root word for Judah.

Shiloh is a Hebraic word that can be translated several ways:

- Unto Him all people shall gather
- The One who brings peace
- Until he come whose right it is

In either translation the meaning comes out; Jacob said that the tribe of Judah would ascend to rulership and remain there until a certain "one" (who will bring peace, who will gather the people, who has the right) arrives.

This prophecy was fulfilled in Christ because Judah did remain the dominant tribe until Jesus (prince of peace, gathered the church, sent by God and therefore had the right to do these things) Judah lasted in dominance until Jesus (Shiloh) came.

In 70 AD, after Jesus departed, the Romans completely destroyed Jerusalem and took captive her people, more importantly there was never again a Jewish king from the tribe of Judah, to this day. So the scepter did stay with Judah until Jesus came and then was removed and given to the church. Jesus was from this tribe. Jacob predicted in his inspired prophecy 2,000 years before Christ.

4. Zebulun and Issachar

¹³ "Zebulun will dwell at the seashore;
And he *shall be* a haven for ships,
And his flank *shall be* toward Sidon.

¹⁴ "Issachar is a strong donkey,
Lying down between the sheepfolds.

¹⁵ "When he saw that a resting place was good
And that the land was pleasant,
He bowed his shoulder to bear *burdens*,
And became a slave at forced labor.

These are two other sons of Leah, Jacob touches on each briefly. Zebulun would live and thrive towards the sea and his later territory extended

between the Sea of Galilee and the Mediterranean. Jesus' later ministry was conducted in this area.

He says that even though Issachar was wealthy in land, he was lazy by character and eventually this laziness would cost him. Eventually this led to him being overrun and enslaved. In the end, Issachar was in servitude to others just as Jacob had prophesied.

5. Dan

¹⁶ "Dan shall judge his people,
As one of the tribes of Israel.

¹⁷ "Dan shall be a serpent in the way,
A horned snake in the path,
That bites the horse's heels,
So that his rider falls backward.

¹⁸ "For Your salvation I wait, O Lord.

Dan was a son of a handmaid but assured by Jacob that he would have land and a place of leadership. Jacob also reveals some of the events in Dan's future:

- The reference to the serpent may refer to the fact that Dan was one of the smallest tribes but quite fierce in defending its borders.
- Also, the idea of the serpent suggests evil and we know that it was Dan that officially introduced idolatry to the land (Judges 18:30).
- Also, Dan was the place where Jeroboam, who led a revolt against Solomon, set up idolatrous calves for worship.

This is the first time "salvation" is used in the Bible.

6. Gad, Asher, Naphtali

¹⁹ "As for Gad, raiders shall raid him,
But he will raid *at* their heels.

²⁰ "As for Asher, his food shall be rich,
And he will yield royal dainties.

²¹ "Naphtali is a doe let loose,
He gives beautiful words.

Gad is assured that although he was geographically vulnerable from attack, he would be able to repel his attackers.

Asher would receive a choice and rich piece of land but history showed that because of this ease and luxury the tribe failed to conquer all of its rightful land and eventually became insignificant.

Naphtali would be known for swiftness as well as literate minds and production. Deborah's victory song fulfills partially this ability with words (Judges 5:1-31).

7. Joseph

²² "Joseph is a fruitful bough,
A fruitful bough by a spring;
Its branches run over a wall.

²³ "The archers bitterly attacked him,
And shot *at him* and harassed him;

²⁴ But his bow remained firm,
And his arms were agile,
From the hands of the Mighty One of Jacob
(From there is the Shepherd, the Stone of Israel),

²⁵ From the God of your father who helps you,
And by the Almighty who blesses you
With blessings of heaven above,
Blessings of the deep that lies beneath,
Blessings of the breasts and of the womb.

²⁶ "The blessings of your father

Have surpassed the blessings of my ancestors
Up to the utmost bound of the everlasting hills;
May they be on the head of Joseph,
And on the crown of the head of the one distinguished among
his brothers.

Jacob's best words are reserved for Judah and Joseph. To one the promise of spiritual blessings, leadership, and strength (Judah). To the other the blessings of physical prosperity in family, abundance, and strength. Both were faithful (one from a young age, the other grew faithful with time) but both became so through adversity.

God is referred to here as "the Shepherd" and for the first time, "the Rock" or "the Stone," all figures repeated by Christ in the New Testament.

Jacob acknowledges that he had greater blessings than his father or grandfather and that he wanted to shower greater blessings on Joseph and his grandchildren (played the spoiling grandparent with them).

8. Benjamin

²⁷ "Benjamin is a ravenous wolf;
In the morning he devours the prey,
And in the evening he divides the spoil."

Of the final and youngest, Jacob predicts that he will be strong and aggressive but become cruel and voracious. They were almost destroyed because of a battle waged against them for having attacked and raped a woman. Later on Saul, from this tribe, became the first king.

With this, all the sons have been blessed or warned, and Jacob utters his last words.

JACOB'S LAST WORDS

²⁹ Then he charged them and said to them, "I am about to be gathered to my people; bury me with my fathers in the cave

that is in the field of Ephron the Hittite,³⁰ in the cave that is in the field of Machpelah, which is before Mamre, in the land of Canaan, which Abraham bought along with the field from Ephron the Hittite for a burial site.³¹ There they buried Abraham and his wife Sarah, there they buried Isaac and his wife Rebekah, and there I buried Leah—³² the field and the cave that is in it, purchased from the sons of Heth."³³ When Jacob finished charging his sons, he drew his feet into the bed and breathed his last, and was gathered to his people.

His final instruction to all of them is to bury him with his father and grandfather and their wives. This will be a testimony of their combined faith that they believed God even though they did not receive the promise.

Gathered to his people is not just buried but gone to join the others like him who believed and await the coming of the Lord.

JACOB'S BURIAL – CHAPTER 50

¹ Then Joseph fell on his father's face, and wept over him and kissed him. ² Joseph commanded his servants the physicians to embalm his father. So the physicians embalmed Israel. ³ Now forty days were required for it, for such is the period required for embalming. And the Egyptians wept for him seventy days.
- Genesis 50:1-3

Jacob's death is mourned not only by his sons but also by the nation. The embalming process took 40 days. The national mourning was for 70 days. It seems that Jacob had become recognized as a great man even among this pagan nation.

⁴ When the days of mourning for him were past, Joseph spoke to the household of Pharaoh, saying, "If now I have found favor in your sight, please speak to Pharaoh, saying, ⁵ 'My father made me swear, saying, "Behold, I am about to die; in my grave which I dug for myself in the land of Canaan, there

you shall bury me." Now therefore, please let me go up and bury my father; then I will return."⁶ Pharaoh said, "Go up and bury your father, as he made you swear."

⁷ So Joseph went up to bury his father, and with him went up all the servants of Pharaoh, the elders of his household and all the elders of the land of Egypt,⁸ and all the household of Joseph and his brothers and his father's household; they left only their little ones and their flocks and their herds in the land of Goshen.⁹ There also went up with him both chariots and horsemen; and it was a very great company.

Joseph was in subjection to the Pharaoh and needed permission to go which he readily received. The group that went with him shows that the nation accorded this burial the same importance as a state funeral. The families, however, had every intention of returning to their prosperous land, and now home, in Egypt.

Verses 10 to 14 describe the funeral itself and the elaborate ceremonies both Joseph's family and the Egyptians went through when they arrived at the burial cave.

¹⁵ When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, "What if Joseph bears a grudge against us and pays us back in full for all the wrong which we did to him!"¹⁶ So they sent a *message* to Joseph, saying, "Your father charged before he died, saying,¹⁷ 'Thus you shall say to Joseph, 'Please forgive, I beg you, the transgression of your brothers and their sin, for they did you wrong.'" And now, please forgive the transgression of the servants of the God of your father." And Joseph wept when they spoke to him.¹⁸ Then his brothers also came and fell down before him and said, "Behold, we are your servants."¹⁹ But Joseph said to them, "Do not be afraid, for am I in God's place?²⁰ As for you, you meant evil against me, *but* God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive.²¹ So therefore, do not be afraid; I will provide for you and your little ones." So he comforted them and spoke kindly to them.

An interesting side note here is that the brothers become afraid that with Jacob's death, Joseph would have nothing holding him back from taking revenge. They even try to make restitution by offering themselves as his slaves, like they had once forced him to become.

He is touched deeply, finally convinced of their sincerity and repentance. He refuses their offer and reassures them in two ways:

- He promises to continue supporting them and their children.
- He acknowledges that even though it was evil, God used it for good and thus even he had to defer to God's will not to punish.

JOSEPH'S DEATH – VS. 22-26

²² Now Joseph stayed in Egypt, he and his father's household, and Joseph lived one hundred and ten years. ²³ Joseph saw the third generation of Ephraim's sons; also the sons of Machir, the son of Manasseh, were born on Joseph's knees.

Jacob died when Joseph was 56 years old. Man's longevity was declining after the flood:

- **Abraham** – 175
- **Isaac** – 180
- **Jacob** – 147
- **Joseph** – 110

Joseph was blessed in that he lived to see and bury his father and enjoy his own great, great grandchildren.

²⁴ Joseph said to his brothers, "I am about to die, but God will surely take care of you and bring you up from this land to the land which He promised on oath to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob." ²⁵ Then Joseph made the sons of Israel swear, saying, "God will surely take care of you, and you shall carry my

bones up from here." ²⁶ So Joseph died at the age of one hundred and ten years; and he was embalmed and placed in a coffin in Egypt.

It is interesting to note that Joseph, who was the second youngest, dies before his brothers. He uses the occasion to remind them that God's original promise was to give them the land of Canaan and even though they are in Egypt (comfortably) God will eventually take them out. His prophecy will be fulfilled 400 years later by Moses.

As a testimony to his faith, he makes them promise that when they do leave, they will take his remains and bury him in the Promised Land. This was fulfilled in Exodus 13:19 where the children of Israel took his bones with them when they left Egypt under Moses. He was embalmed and like great leaders of Egypt, his crypt was known publicly.

This is the end of Genesis and the story of the creation of the world, the selection of God's people and their settling in Egypt. In the next and last chapter, some reflections on our own journey through Genesis.

LESSONS

1. Nothing stops God's promises

Joseph was sold, the famine (may have been a work of Satan to destroy the family), the hardship and separation, none of these could stop the promise of God to this family from being fulfilled. Satan may work against you and he will, but never doubt that God will fulfill His promises to you personally.

2. Looks are deceiving

It did not look like it but Jacob was the greater man when compared to the king.

The church looks puny and helpless at times, small and powerless in comparison to the forces in this world. Do not judge by outward, superficial appearances, the church is invincible (the gates of hell will not

prevail – Matthew 16:18) nothing will destroy or outlast it. Never doubt this!

3. God forgives and forgets – even when we cannot

The brothers had been forgiven but they could not forgive themselves and kept trying to do something to make restitution, however, nothing they did could pay Joseph back for the thirteen years in prison and slavery he had suffered. His offer of forgiveness to his brothers was like God's offer, based on grace.

Jesus makes restitution for all the evil we have done and when we accept Him in repentance and baptism (Acts 2:38), God forgives and forgets all of our sins (in the sense that He covers them over).

If God forgives us then we can forgive ourselves and put our sins behind us because they will not be there when we meet God in judgment.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Summarize the prophecy of each of Jacob's sons and answer the following questions:
 - Why would Jacob prophesy to his sons?
 - Speculate. Could the sons change the direction of their lives as given by Jacob, and if so, what would be required of them, and how does this impact us individually as God's people?
2. Why did Jacob specify where he was to be buried?
3. What is significant about Joseph's brothers fearing that Joseph would take vengeance on them now that Jacob was dead?
4. What was significant about Joseph desiring to be buried in Canaan?
5. How can you use this lesson to grow spiritually and help others come into a relationship with Jesus?

50.

Final Summary

This is the fiftieth and final chapter on the book of Genesis. In the course of this study I have relied on the Book of Genesis itself, going over every verse in the 50 chapters (1,533 verses). Genesis, at 50 chapters is the fourth longest book in the Bible (Psalms is the longest followed by Isaiah and Jeremiah).

I have also relied on the work by Dr. Henry Morris called the "Genesis Record" which is a good commentary on the book of Genesis.

It would be impossible to review the entire book in this last chapter but, if you have noticed, at the end of every chapter starting at chapter seven I have included brief application lessons. In keeping with that process, I would like to summarize the entire book by offering what I believe to be the top three lessons from Genesis.

Lesson #1 – Genesis is Inspired

We spent many chapters of this book studying the first verse and early chapters of Genesis because these contained the information that explained key ideas that help us make sense of our world:

- When and how the world was created, as well as by whom and why.
- The origin of humanity. The true image of God – one man and one woman.
- The cause of evil and death – disobedience of God's laws.

- The reason for the present condition of the creation – the global flood.
- God's ultimate purpose for mankind – to save mankind from sin and give him eternal life.

All of these ideas are outlined and explained in the book of Genesis and no other book contains this information in an ordered and purposeful way.

In recent years the attack against the Bible has been focused on the book of Genesis for the simple reason that if you can discredit the foundation, then the entire structure will come tumbling down. Some have offered other theories to explain all of this and have claimed that the Bible is in error because it does not agree with their theory. In response to these, many Christians have begun to change their views of Genesis in order to accommodate modern theories. For example:

- Genesis is partially inspired, everything except the creation story is inspired.
- It does not really mean what it says, it is only symbolic.

People do this because they cannot answer some of the questions and problems brought forth by the doubters and disbelievers (fossil records, etc.).

There have been doubts and complex questions throughout history and the interesting thing to note is that when these matters were resolved, the answers always confirmed that the Bible was correct and not whatever popular theory of the day was in vogue.

Recently *Time* magazine reported that scientists studying the DNA of ancient human fossils discovered that man originated from one small and concentrated group in one region fairly recently (they say 250 thousand years ago). This contradicts evolutionists who claim humans evolved spontaneously in various geographic areas over millions of years. Their discovery is much more in line with the Genesis account than Darwin's account.

If we live to be 1,000 years old there will be other theories and other attacks to undermine the foundation of God's Word, we should not be surprised, afraid, or discouraged.

New questions, new difficulties, new doubts, but if we did live to be a 1000-years-old, we would see a pattern that has existed for centuries. Disbelievers, scoffers, and doubters come and go, but Genesis remains to teach us the true nature of our world, our society, and our God.

The grass withers, the flower fades,
But the word of our God stands forever.
- Isaiah 40:8

Lesson #2 – God is Gracious

They say that the Old Testament reveals the Father, the Gospels reveal the Son and the rest of the Bible reveals the Holy Spirit. This is fairly true because in the book of Genesis we see the promise of the Son and indirect references to the Holy Spirit but chapter after chapter of the Father creating as well as dealing with man in good and bad times.

The one thing that shines through all of these many chapters is that God, the Father, is gracious. Gracious means several things:

- **Generous** – we see His generosity in the world that He creates. Not some blank, bland, uncomfortable place, but a mind boggling assortment of colors, types, shapes and sounds that we could not experience even if we lived a 1000 years! There is more here than we need.
- **Thoughtful** – what He gives and creates is done with the thought of every living creature in mind. Our most mundane acts and needs are carefully provided for.
- **Merciful** – if anything, Genesis teaches us that God is loving, kind, and merciful. He devises a plan to save the man who rejects Him, destroys his own life and causes the ruin of the beautiful

creation that God had given him. In every story from Adam to Noah to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob we see the very same scenario:

A majestic, mighty and merciful God dealing kindly and patiently with weak, sinful and stubborn people. He never gives up, He never loses patience, He always pursues His ultimate goal of bringing people out of this fallen world into the heavenly place where He lives.

Many have an image of God as a tyrant, a judge, a demanding angry father, but they did not get this image from the book of Genesis. From the calm and inquiring voice confronting Adam and Eve in the garden to the reassuring presence encouraging Jacob to go into Egypt to join his long lost son, Genesis reveals an unbroken image of God, our Father, who cares for His sons and daughters and plans for their ultimate happiness, just like earthly fathers try to do.

Later on, when the Israelites become a nation and continually rebel directly against God and we see Him repeatedly discipline them, this image of graciousness is less evident, but here, in Genesis, as mankind is in its infancy, we see God the gracious and tender Father leading His children in their first steps leading to maturity.

Lesson #3 – Salvation is by Faith

Some people actually think that the idea of salvation being by faith is an idea introduced only in the New Testament. They wrongly conclude that in the Old Testament people were saved by the Law. The error here is that the Jews, especially the Pharisees, began to think that they could be right with God by meticulously keeping the Law, especially the ceremonial law of sacrificing, food and tithing, etc. This was never so. In Genesis God establishes the one and only way that a person could be saved (become right with God and avoid condemnation because of sin).

And He took him outside and said,

⁵ Now look toward the heavens, and count the stars, if you are able to count them. And He said to him, "So shall your

descendants be." ⁶ Then he believed in the Lord; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness.

- Genesis 15:5-6

The only way, from the very beginning, to be right with God is to believe Him. If someone believes Him, this faith will motivate obedience, trust, etc. God promised that He would send someone to pay the price for sin and the entire Bible is the story of how Jesus eventually came and did this.

In Genesis, God required that a person believe Him in order to be acceptable, in the New Testament God requires that people believe in His Son Jesus Christ in order to become acceptable and, therefore, saved from condemnation because of sin.

In Genesis God required obedience as a way of acting out faith, this included circumcision and following God's lead as to worship, conduct and service. In the New Testament God still requires obedience in the form of baptism and following God's lead as to worship, conduct, and service (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:36-47; Acts 22:16).

Genesis is the beginning and from the very beginning God has required man to believe what He has said and trust Him regardless of the circumstances.

Genesis is the beginning of the story of how man pleases God, comes to know God, is saved by God, all through the act of believing and taking Him at His word.

SUMMARY

This is our final chapter in a long and in-depth study about the book of beginnings:

- A book that comes from God
- A book that reveals a gracious God
- A book that shows us that faith is what ultimately saves us

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Summarize Genesis in one sentence.
2. What are the major lessons you have learned from Genesis?
3. What are some major expressions of faith described in Genesis and what do they teach us?
4. Read James 1:1-8 and discuss how this passage relates to the overall life of the major characters in Genesis.

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