

A Survey of Genesis



Cornelius Church of Christ

Winter-Spring 2023

January 4 – June 28

CLASS	READING	DATE
1	GENESIS 1	January 4, 2023
2	GENESIS 2	January 11, 2023
3	GENESIS 3	January 18, 2023
4	GENESIS 4	January 25, 2023
5	GENESIS 5-9	February 1, 2023
6	GENEIS 10-11	February 8, 2023
7	GENESIS 12-13	February 15, 2023
8	GENESIS 14	February 22, 2023
9	GENESIS 15-17	March 1, 2023
10	GENESIS 18-19	March 8, 2023
11	GENESIS 20-21	March 15, 2023
12	GENESIS 22-23	March 22, 2023
13	GENESIS 24	March 29, 2023
14	GENESIS 25-26	April 5, 2023
15	GENESIS 27	April 12, 2023
16	GENESIS 28	April 19, 2023
17	GENESIS 29-31	April 26, 2023
18	GENESIS 32-33	May 3, 2023
19	GENESIS 34-36	May 10, 2023
20	GENESIS 37-38	May 17, 2023
21	GENESIS 39-40	May 24, 2023
22	GENESIS 41	May 31, 2023
23	GENESIS 42-45	June 7, 2023
24	GENESIS 46-47	June 14, 2023
25	GENESIS 48-49	June 21, 2023
26	GENESIS 50	June 28, 2023

CLASS 1: Genesis 1 and the Creation

January 4, 2023

SUMMARY:

Genesis 1 is also a controversial concept, as many struggle to believe the truth of the statement. Some out rightly reject this chapter (and Scriptures) as a myth. Others see it as possibly a figurative or symbolic passage. Yet by study we can see that not only is there no evidence that it is symbolic, but that it is expected as a matter of faith to be accepted as true. This is stated in Hebrews 11:3 - *By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible.*

Is the Creation important? We can find in the NT that Jesus is identified on numerous occasions as being the Creator of all things (John 1:3, Heb. 1:2). The miracles He performed often were to control nature to demonstrate this. Thus, the identity of Jesus is within the concept of the power of the Creator. As well, Jesus used the events of creation as the authority for His law on marriage (Matthew 19:4-6, Genesis 2:24). Therefore, we see that the doctrines of Christ are rooted in the creation.

Does the Creation account suggest symbolism? Typically in the Bible symbolic passages introduce themselves as such rather clearly (consider Revelation 4:2 or Daniel 7:1). There is nothing stated in Genesis 1 that suggests it is symbolic. In some instances, symbolic passage are restated by others in a way that explains they are symbolic. For example, when Peter quoted Joel in Acts 2, it makes clear that Joel's language of the last days was symbolic of the time of Pentecost. The account of creation is restated numerous times in the Old and New Testaments (Exodus 31:17, Mark 10:5-6, I Corinthians 15:7). It seems clear in these instances that not only was it not referred to as symbolic, the referees (Moses, Jesus, Paul) believed it to be literal.

Why then would anyone question the creation as literal? Our questions of the creation cannot come from the text. Therefore, they can only come from outside. Of course, we know that there are many different theories that attempt to explain the origin of our world. In the times of Christ and before, it was Paganism that sought to offer the popular pagan alternative. Today that alternative is found in evolution. It is not accepted based on merit or understanding, but on peer pressure or accusations of ignorance

Could the creation account encompass long periods of time? Some suggest that perhaps the account in Genesis is only half-symbolic; that perhaps the days of creation are actually eons of time. They point out that there are passages in the Bible that use day for ages, and statements like 2 Peter 3:8 seem to suggest this possibility. However, it is clear in Genesis 1 that the days are specifically defined as the way we consider a day: *God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night. So the evening and the morning were the first day* - Genesis 1:5. Consider that God created plants on day three, but the sun on day 4. How could this situation have existed for eons? The days of creation are the formation of our week; it seems clear in Exodus 20:11 that six literal days are meant.

What is important about the events in Genesis 1 is not just the doctrinal points in Christianity. It is also the danger of unbelief. The only reason to doubt it is true is the teachings of men; how can one hope to be saved if that sways our belief? As Christians, we are called to believe a number of remarkable, incredible things; That the world was created in six days; That the world was flooded and destroyed; That a nation was decimated by plagues; That a man was born of a virgin; That a man died but then came back to life; that sin can be removed by obedience; that the dead shall live again. Where would we be if we begin disbelief because of the great things we are told by God?

QUESTIONS

Why must we believe in the creation as found in Genesis 1?

What are some of the alternatives people suggest to the creation account?

Why would God rest on the seventh day?

What are some of the evidences that confirm the creation account in Genesis 1?

SUMMARY

Genesis 2 Restates the last day of creation from Genesis 1. Here we see God placing man in the Garden of Eden (meaning pleasure or paradise). He brings all animals before man, but no suitable helpmeet is found. He then causes a sleep to fall on Adam, and from his side Woman is created. The chapter concludes with the statement that this is the creation of marriage. There are four lessons from marriage we can take from this passage.

God Creates Marriage: It is God who “marries” people. This might seem clear, but this means that it is NOT the preacher or a church (marriage is not a sacrament of any church). It is NOT the government or a license. Instead God joins a man and a woman in marriage. Marriage is a purpose and intent to live as husband and wife; it requires a public declaration of that intention. It is not merely living together, but a commitment of an intent to covenant.

Marriage is one man, one woman, and one life. As seen here, marriage is a legal, natural definition that excludes Polygamy, Divorce, Fornication, Incest, and Homosexual relationships. Some of these things were tolerated under the Law of Moses; as Jesus said in Matthew 19:8 *“Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, permitted you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so”*. God may have winked at these things in the past, but now commands all men everywhere to repent.

Marriage Requires Intimacy: Marriage should be different than any relationship; it is not just a close friendship. As Jesus points out, *“two become one”*. This is in a carnal and spiritual sense. Later the writer in Hebrews 13: 4 declares that *“marriage is to be held in honor among all, and the marriage bed is to be undefiled; for fornicators and adulterers God will judge”*.

God knew what He was doing. Today marriage is not held in the same esteem as in times past. Many who are not spiritual cannot see the value of marriage. Yet marriage is shown even in worldly circles to be of great value. At the same time, trying to obtain the benefits of marriage outside of marriage fails because of the lack of commitment to something apart from a person, and it creates a lack of confidence in home. Like a rose, we are attracted at first to the bloom, but that will fade. In order to grow we need to be committed to something more than attraction.

There is excitement when Adam saw Eve. *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). Repeatedly when God finished part of the creation, He declared it good. When He completed man, He saw it was Very Good. Yet it was not good for man to be alone, so marriage was necessary to be perfect.

QUESTIONS

Why is it important to understand that both man and woman are created in God’s image?

Why did God create marriage?

What is a covenant?

What is the significance that marriage existed before sin or before the church?

How did the law of Moses deviate from this law of marriage?

Why does Jesus return to this law in His law in Matthew 19?

What are some of the false teachings on marriage today?

SUMMARY

Genesis 3 is one of the most important chapters in the book of Genesis (indeed, perhaps the Old Testament), as it documents the entrance of sin into the world, and the consequences thereof. There are numerous references to this event in the New Testament, many pointing to the necessity of the death of Christ to remedy the situation introduced there. Adam's sin is parallel to the sin of every person who follows him; it is a choice we make in an innocent condition with eternal consequences.

The chapter begins introducing us to the Serpent, who is Satan (Rev. 20:2). Let us first be clear to say that we are told very little about the background of Satan; Scriptures do not call him a fallen angel or a created being, although both may explain his origin. We are told that he has authority (Heb. 2:14), and is a prince of the power of the air and the god of this world, both statements which correspond to the idea that he dwells NOT in hell, but here on earth (see also Job 1:7, 1 Pet. 5:8). As one with authority he is not to be reviled (Jude 8-9), but he is to be resisted (James 4:7).

Satan's approach here and even today is threefold: he begins with a lie about death (consider John 8:44); then he switches the meaning of words (sin becomes wisdom), and finally he reviles God as the agent of evil. This tool is still in effect.

Satan manipulates the view of Tree of Knowledge, which is the main representation of the world in the Garden. There is an important point in this: there are three appeals that the tree has which we are told in 1 John 2:15-16 represent all aspects of worldliness; they also represent the temptation of Jesus "in all ways as we are".

What is interesting is to see that in Genesis 2:9, the other trees in the Garden were available to satisfy this desire. Yet Satan managed to appeal to Eve's desires to sin.

Eve was seduced mainly by her own desires. James 1 speaks about seeking wisdom. Then it points out that we are not tempted by God, but by our own desires. While Satan tempted Eve, it was her own desires that caused her to sin. When God confronted Adam, He pointed out that Adam's sin was not to refuse his wife. Here is a totality of sinful behavior: weakness against others and acting on desire. Thus Adam and Eve were banished from the Garden.

QUESTIONS

Why is it important to understand how 1 John 2:15-17 relates to Genesis 3?

Why is it important to understand how Luke 4:1-13 relates to Genesis 3?

Why would God put the tree in the garden?

Who is the serpent?

Why would God permit the serpent to enter the garden?

How was the serpent cursed? How was man cursed? How was woman cursed?

What is the important distinction between the curse of eating the tree (Gen. 2:17) and the actual expulsion from the garden (Gen. 3:22)?

SUMMARY

Genesis 4 is a heartbreaking chapter, as it records the first murder and the subsequent devastation that was had on the first family. There are a number of lessons to be learned from this record.

First, we must offer God what He desires. Genesis 4 records the first sacrifices of men in Scripture. Cain (the oldest) brings out some of the produce of the ground, while Abel brings the firstlings of his flock. What Cain offered was unacceptable to God, and God had no regard for him or his offering. Yet Abel's gift was accepted. It may be that this was something God had spoken about earlier, or perhaps they had discerned this from the first sacrifice God made to cover Adam and Eve (Gen. 3:21). It may have been simply that the offerings of Cain were not the best or first. Whatever the case, Cain should have known what was pleasing to God.

Second, attitude is everything. When Cain's sacrifice is rejected, the Bible says he became angry and his countenance fell. God warns him that he needs to improve his attitude, as sin was preparing to come to him through his demeanor. This is an important lesson. Our attitudes are a major reason why we sin. We are warned often in the New Testament of the dangers of bad attitudes and emotional outbursts. Bad attitudes lead to evil behavior, as seen in the "Root of bitterness" of Hebrews 12:15-16. Anger is a great danger (James 1:20), and jealousy destroys (James 3:14-16). Consider the warning of 1 John 3:12: (Be) *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.*

Third, sin always becomes known. When we sin, we want to keep it secret. Adam and Eve hid in the Garden, and David tried to cover up his wickedness with more wickedness. Sin is a work of darkness that is revealed by the light (Eph. 5:12). We need to consider that God works to make our sins known. He does this because He desires that we repent of our sins, and because He desires that others fear the works of sin. As Jesus said in Luke 12:2-3 *"But there is nothing covered up that will not be revealed, and hidden that will not be known. Accordingly, whatever you have said in the dark will be heard in the light, and what you have whispered in the inner rooms will be proclaimed upon the housetops"*

Finally, there are consequences to sin. We know from Genesis 3 that the wages of sin are spiritual death (Romans 6:23). We also saw in Genesis 3 that sin ruins lives now; we call this the consequences of sin. In this chapter, what were the consequences of sin? It broke apart the first family; it caused Cain to be rejected and alone; it cost Cain the promise of the land. Jude 10 warns of the nature of sin to cause destruction, pointing to the error of Cain and others who suffered in this life (and still had the wages of sin) for sin: *For they have gone the way of Cain, and for pay they have rushed headlong into the error of Balaam, and perished in the rebellion of Korah.*

QUESTIONS

How should Cain have known what to offer as a sacrifice?

How does someone raise their countenance?

Why does not raising our countenance lead to sin?

How does sin become known?

Why might God give Cain some mercy in the curse?

SUMMARY

Genesis 5-9 record the events of the flood, when God destroyed the world and delivered Noah and his family in the ark. From a historical standpoint, the flood is the most recorded event in ancient history. There are 270 accounts from all over the world of the flood. They all share parallel details with the biblical account, supporting the accuracy of that account. In fact, this similarity and universal characteristic of the flood narrative causes problems for skeptics who deny that it happened.

But the important lessons of the flood are not historical, but spiritual. They revolve around several important points: grace and destruction. Genesis 6:8 is the first mention of Grace in the bible (*"Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD"*). We often define grace as "unmerited favor". Here grace was manifested and gives us a better insight into its meaning. God bestowed grace on Noah; the Bible states in Genesis 6:13 that God revealed His plan to Noah, and in Genesis 6:14 God gave Noah instructions (commandments) to obey to be saved. This is the ultimate, absolute description of Grace. Grace is manifested by God revealing purpose and commandment.

In the New Testament, this grace is still seen. When preached in places such as Acts 18:27 or 20:32, the concept of grace remains the same as in the time of Noah; God's grace is manifested by revealing His will and plan, and by giving us commandments to obey. In places such as Romans 3:24, 5:2, 1 Corinthians 15:10 and 2 Corinthians 1:12, the emphasis on our salvation by grace is made clear. We are saved because God revealed His will and plan, and because we obey what He told us to do.

Noah did all that God commanded Him, and he and his family were saved. In Hebrews 11:7, we are told this obedience to grace is faith that saved him (*By faith Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith*). We are saved by grace through faith (Eph. 2:8); meaning, we are saved because we act on the grace (revelation) given by God. Noah's life reveals that God gives Grace (Revelation and Command) and that we are then saved by Faith (Believe and Obey). Noah's obedience reveals that faith is specific adherence to God's commands.

Multiple times in the New Testament the events in Genesis 6 through 9 are referenced in regards to the end of time, and the ultimate destruction of the world. Jesus in Matthew 24:37-39 discussed the similarity in His ultimate return and the days of Noah, and paralleled the surprise nature of these two events. In 2 Peter 2:5-9 Peter compares the end of time and the flood by the similarity of God saving the righteous and bringing to judgment the wicked. In 2 Peter 3:5-7 Peter again references the flood, this time pointing to the ultimate destructive nature. The Flood testifies that God can separate the righteous and unrighteous, that God WILL destroy the world, and that the ultimate destruction will come without warning.

QUESTIONS

What might it mean that God was grieved that He had created man?

How do we describe Grace in lieu of this event?

How do we answer people who believe that the flood and Noah's ark is a parable or myth?

What was the covenant of Noah? Who did it apply to?

What are the important lessons mentioned in in the New Testament we learn from the flood?

SUMMARY

Genesis 10 and 11 tells us of the dispersion of the human race after Noah. Genesis 10 gives us what is commonly called the table of nations, which plot out in a very generic way the nations of the earth. Importantly, the Semitic line of Shem (through which the promise of Christ would come) is revealed.

God commanded me to repopulate the earth, but in an act of rebellion men instead gathered together on the plain of Shinar (roughly in the Middle of Iraq today, Daniel 1:2). There they agreed to build two things: a city and tower. As an aside, it may be the case they were led by Nimrod, someone who is recorded by Jewish historians Josephus and Philo as a wicked man. His kingdom in Genesis 10 seems to parallel what happened in Genesis 11, and we are told he was the founder of the city they built (although Babel and Babylon or not necessarily the same place).

With the Tower of Babel men had three goals: to get to heaven (to be saved); to make a name for themselves; to avoid doing what God had commanded. God took care of the situation with patience and permanent impact. He confused the languages of the world and scattered men across the world. There is historical evidence remaining for these events, as ancient as they were; this includes the ziggurats of Mesopotamia and the pyramids of the world, similar narratives in widespread cultures, and the origin of many language families being in the caucuses. The primary lesson here is man's rebellion (the worst sin) and God's patience.

The Tower of Babel records the first man-made religion. It was an attempt by man to get to heaven, which is the purpose of religion. Yet Scriptures are clear that there is only one way to heaven (John 14:6) and that it is not popular or desirable (Matthew 7:13). This first religion is still the pattern of man made religions today. People are still trying to make a name for themselves with (1) religious titles (Matthew 23), (2) denominations (1 Corinthians 1) and (3) acting without authority (2 Thessalonians 2)

Manmade religion scattered the human race and confused our languages. One of the most important lessons here is that the day of Pentecost undid what happened at the tower of Babel. When the Apostles began speaking in tongues, it (literally) took away the confusion of languages. More importantly, when they preached baptism for remission of sins, they revealed the only means to enter heaven. Finally, as this was a baptism in the name of Jesus Christ, it offered to mankind a name of renown.

QUESTIONS

What do we read about Nimrod in Genesis 10?

What was the city and tower built out of?

Why did they build the tower?

Why did God confuse language?

How does the day of Pentecost undo the Tower of Babel?

Who do we meet at the end of Genesis 11?

SUMMARY

Abram (Later Abraham) is clearly someone important in the Bible. Matthew begins the genealogy of Jesus with Abraham. He is referenced nearly 70 times in the New Testament, only surpassed by Moses. His original name in the Bible is Abram (Exalted Father), but he will be known as Abraham, father of many. Ab is the first word in Hebrew (alphabetically).

Abraham is the model of Faith. Abraham is often referred to as the Father of All Faithful in the New Testament. (Romans 9:6-8, Galatians 3:6) Abraham was not the first man of faith, but the first to have OUR faith – things he would never see in His life, but instead he saw them by faith. His promises were to come after he was gone.

Abraham is the model of living as a sojourner/pilgrim (Hebrews 11:8-10) We are meant to live here in tents waiting for a reward apart from this life, and we are meant to be separated from the world. Abraham understood this well.

Abraham is the model of obedience and seeking God. He called on the Lord and was deemed righteous by faith (Romans 4:3). We often point to the error of defining faith as just believing, but there is a righteousness in believing God. In Genesis 15:5-6, Abraham believed God when God told Him His plan, and God's word was enough to satisfy his worry. These made Abraham was a friend of God (James 2:2).

In Genesis 13 we see that the land that Lot and Abram are sojourning on is not enough for both of them, and they must separate. Abram gives Lot the choice of where to go, and Lot picked the best land, in the Jordan River valley. However, this is the location of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. Later in Genesis 19:1-26 we see that Lot's decision to live there costs him greatly. He loses his possessions, his sons and sons-in-law (and perhaps some of his daughters), and his wife. This is an important lesson in the Law of Unintended Consequences

We all know that decisions have consequences. Sometimes there are clear intended consequences; consider the consequence of obedience to the Gospel (or disobedience to the Gospel). You know for certain what will happen. Sometimes too there are unforeseeable consequences. But in Lots case, there was a consequence that he should have known, but that he did not desire. This was an unintended foreseeable consequences. Unintended consequences are things for which we did NOT prepare, but which we should have seen coming

QUESTIONS

What was God's first commandment to Abram?

What did God promise in return?

How is Abram/Abraham the father of those who live by faith?

Why might Abram have taken Lot with him?

Why did Abram and Lot separate?

Why did Lot choose the land he did?

What important lessons do we learn from Lot?

SUMMARY

Genesis 14 seems at first to be merely a record of history. The nation of Elam attacks the land of Canaan, and in the ensuing battle Lot is taken captive. Abraham pursues, and successfully retakes Lot. Yet the real treasure of the chapter is Melchizedek, the first priest mentioned in the Bible. The whole reference is just three verses, but they are loaded with power. First, there had been a great battle in which Abram had sent his forces to deliver the captives of the city of Sodom, in particular, his nephew Lot. When he returned victorious, the Bible says two kings came to meet him. One was the King of Sodom (wickedness), and one was the king of Salem (righteousness). Melchizedek brought him sustenance, and the blessing of God. The king of Sodom offered him praise and wealth. Abram rejected the praise and wealth of the king of Sodom, and instead offered a tenth to the king of Salem.

Apart from a mysterious reference in Psalm 110:4, no other mention is made of this mysterious king priest. But 1500 years after he was mentioned, Melchizedek is again referenced in Hebrews 5 and following. The writer of Hebrews is attempting to explain a great mystery. How could Jesus, who was descended from the tribe of David, be a High Priest? Only those from the tribe of Levi could be priests. The Hebrew writer explains that the answer lies in this Melchizedek and the promises of God. God had told Abraham that through him all nations would be blessed. Then in Genesis 14 we see Abraham (the great grandfather of Levi) submit to a priesthood greater than him. Thus we can conclude that this is a priesthood greater than that of Aaron through Levi.

The Hebrew writer (many believe that it is Paul) goes on to discuss the implied qualifications of the priesthood of Melchizedek. First, there is the requirement of an unending life (Hebrews 7:16). Second, there is the requirement of an oath from God Himself (Hebrews 7:21). Only Jesus Christ fulfills these two qualifications. Jesus was Melchizedek, either in foreshadow or in literal truth.

We are called by God through Christ (John 6:44 with John 12:32). We are offered an unending life through Christ (John 11:26). Thus, when we put on the garment of priesthood, that is, when we put on Christ in baptism, we too are priests of the order of Melchizedek.

QUESTIONS

How were the five kings defeated by the Elamites?

How many men did Abram raise to pursue the Elamites?

What is the city of Salem? What does "Salem" mean?

What does "Melchizedek" mean?

Why is it significant that Abram gave Melchizedek a fifth of his loot?

What is a high priest, and what does a high priest do?

What is the "Order of Melchizedek"?

What characteristics of Melchizedek does the Hebrew writer say indicate He was (a type for) Jesus?

CLASS 9: Genesis 15-17 and Abraham's Covenant

March 1, 2023

SUMMARY

Genesis 15 begins with God visiting Abram making two statements. First, He identifies Himself as Abram's shield. This is a common promise of God to those who follow Him. He will be our protection. We don't need to be vested in things of this world to be protected; God Himself protects us. We need to learn to trust this. Second, God tells Abram that His reward is great; some translations say God is his reward. There is a great reward for all who seek God.

When God speaks to Abram, the response of Abram seems to be some doubt. Abram's fear is common to all men who seek God: what if God does not do what He promised? Abram was 75 years old when he left to wander; Isaac won't be born until he is 100 years old. That means he waited 25 years for this, and that could bring up some doubt in anyone.

One of the most powerful statements in the life of Abram is this: *"And he believed in the LORD, and He accounted it to him for righteousness"*. Let us understand that this was NOT a "Plan of Salvation for Sinners". Abram was not turning to God for the first time; God had already given him works to be obedient to (James 2). This was the reward of the true obedient believer, a credit of righteousness. Abram had reason to believe because FAITH included his works.

When Abram asks God *"how may I know that I will possess it?"*, God has Abram enact a covenant. Darkness fell on Abram after this, and scripture say he fell into a great terror. Then God spoke to Abram, and revealed the future. Why speak in this moment of darkness and terror? Perhaps we might consider that the future is frightening, and to reveal everything that will come is not always easy. Consider that we are told that *"we must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God"* in Acts 14:22. Would we want to know every bad thing to come? Abram, in darkness, must see by faith and not sight.

Genesis 16 begins the story of Ishmael. He was born 13 years before Isaac. He was not the son of promise from God, but an action of insecurity and weakness. Sarai, in a moment of weakness gives her maid Hagar to Abram to father children. Then when the son is born, Hagar and Sarai are in strife. Sarai told Abram this was his fault, although it was her suggestion. We might consider here that Abram permitted his wife's insecurity in this situation. He ought not to have agreed with her, but understood she was not certain of her place in the promise (consider Gen. 15:4). This is an important lesson in marriage. Godly wives are called daughters of Sarah in 1 Peter 3, and in verse 7 men are told to live with understanding. Men need to know that it is important to help their wives overcome insecurity (and vice versa). We all need to put aside insecurity and be people of faith (Jeremiah 17:7-8).

In Genesis 17 God makes the ultimate covenant agreement with Abram. While God has made promises before (and mentioned a covenant in Genesis 15:18), this is the moment where the clear terms of the covenant are revealed. God reveals Himself as *El Shaddai* (Exodus 6:3). From previous studies we see that in Scriptures, covenants are composed of two parts: the law and the promise. God's rules are (1) that Abram walk before Him blamelessly and (2) that he circumcise all of his household. The promise is that his descendants will receive the land of Canaan. As part of this sign, Abram and Sarai receive new names: Abraham and Sarah. Abraham becomes the Father of Multitudes, and Sarah becomes the Queen.

QUESTIONS

What is a covenant?

What is a covenant made out of?

What are the characteristics of a covenant?

What are the signs of a covenant?

What was Abram's mistake when Sarai offered Hagar?

SUMMARY

Can you imagine what it would be like meeting God as a Man? This is what happened in Genesis 18, when God showed up on Abraham's doorstep. We are told that God was there to see firsthand the wickedness of Sodom and Gomorrah. But He was also there to see Abraham with some special news.

One of the important lessons here is the hospitality of Abraham. We see how he became obsessed with the care of his guests. We are told in Hebrews 13:2 that this is an example for us to consider, a lesson for us in caring for others. In that visit God made a promise: a son in a season. We know that Sarah laughed at this (as had Abraham Genesis 17).

But the big idea was over the mediation of Abraham for Sodom & Gomorrah. They had a reputation of evil works; there was no denying that. Abraham's mediation had only one: God will be fair to righteous. Mediation is an important idea in the Bible. It is described in Job 9:32-35. A Mediator speaks between two parties of unequal standing. We are told that in the New Testament Jesus is our mediator (Hebrews 9:15), which is his covenant work as a High Priest.

There is also an important idea in the nature of preservation. When Jesus was speaking in the sermon on the mount, He told the listeners that they were (or could be) the salt of the earth (Matthew 5:13-16). This meant that we are a preservative to those around us. If there had been 10 righteous people in Sodom, it might have been spared.

In Genesis 19 the angels travel to meet Lot in Sodom and Gomorrah. Very early on, Sodom and Gomorrah were marked as cities of great evil. *Now the men of Sodom were wicked exceedingly and sinners against the LORD* (Genesis 13:13). We are told more clearly the nature of their sins in the New Testament. In Jude 7 we are told that their wickedness was primarily their sexual immorality of homosexuality. We are told repeated in both the Old and New Testament that homosexuality is an abominable practice before God. We might also see their hatred of Lot for being one who revealed their evil.

Ultimately, Sodom and Gomorrah serve as an example in the New Testament of the punishment of God on the wicked. In 2 Peter 2:6 we are told that God made "*them an example to those who would live ungodly lives thereafter*". They are cited in Matthew 10:15, 11:23, Romans 9:29, and Revelation 11:8 as the typical result of sin. God will punish evildoers.

When the two angels come to the town, Lot insists that they accept his hospitality for their own safety. When the men of the city arrive, Lot offers them his daughters. This is a horrific action that cannot be justified. We need to see that this is one of the times that scriptures reveal someone's conduct with little or no comment to it. That it was evil is revealed by the angelic action of striking out at the men of the city. Perhaps we ought to take no more point of this event than this: evil deeds with good intentions are evil.

Finally, there is Lot's wife. In Luke 17:32-33 Jesus said "*Remember Lot's wife*". Lot's wife is an example of one who believed, but not enough. Obedience matters.

QUESTIONS

Did Abraham know it was God when he saw the Three?

For what reason was God present before Abraham?

What does Hebrews 13:2 mean?

What is the lesson of Sodom and Gomorrah?

What is the lesson of Lot's wife?

SUMMARY

Genesis 20 tells the story of one of the times where Abraham lied about his wife's identity. In fact, he spoke a half truth to the king of the philistines (Abimelech) and caused a plague on the people there because of it. It reminds us that a half-truth intended to deceive is still a lie. God came to Abimelech and told him that Abraham was a prophet (the first time that word is used) and that he was a dead man for attempting to commit adultery. Ultimately, Abimelech and Abraham make peace, and the issue is resolved (in chapter 21 they make a covenant of peace with each other).

But one point that is seen here is the character of Abraham and Sarah's marriage. How was it strong enough to overcome a number of issues? Several times Sarah is taken by another man, and Abraham lies about it. There are the issues that come with Hagar. Finally, they struggled with the problems of a barren womb. How is it that they remained faithful? We need to see that they have a model marriage for us to consider.

We might look to how they each fulfilled their roles in marriage. Abraham as the Father-Leader; he led his home & family in spiritual matters. When time for circumcision came, he let his son into this (Gen. 17:23). Consider how Moses did not (Ex. 4:24). He made righteous spiritual decisions for his household, from his wife and children to even his servants. Finally, while we know that at least one example of this was for the worse, we know that he listened to his wife, a fulfillment of Peter's observation in 1 Peter 3:7

Sarah was also an important image of marriage. She was the Home-Guardian of an enormous estate, no small endeavor. In all things she is known as being faithful to God (Heb. 11:11) and to her husband (Gen. 20:13). She was submissive to her husband, and her addressing of him as lord was not a matter of weakness, but of strength, and assigning him the position of oversight in her home. When she was sent out to live in tents, she did so without apparent complaint.

In Genesis 21 we read about God causing Sarah to conceive a son, Isaac. It is the wonderful culmination of the promises God has been making to Abraham and Sarah since Genesis 12. It is in Isaac that God's work of making a great and peculiar nation from Abraham will be accomplished. As well, it is through Isaac that the seed promise will continue, a promise that is fulfilled in Jesus Christ, in which "all nations shall be blessed". That is the "Blessing" that becomes a great part of the conversation for the remainder of the book of Genesis.

Isaac is named for the Hebrew word "laugh". It is because Sarah (and Abraham) had laughed at the promise God made them a year earlier. Sarah's attitude is now one of praise; she hopes everyone will laugh with her. In Hebrews 11 we are told that it was Sarah's faith that enabled her to conceive.

There is also the difficulty of the strife between Ishmael and Hagar. We have already seen the struggle between Hagar and Sarah, and now the two boys are fighting. This is probably not the strife of siblings but perhaps something more sinister. After all, Ishmael is an older teenager to this toddler, and his attention might be more nefarious than mere child's play. Sarah decides that Ishmael needs to go, and has Abraham send them away. God watches over them and establishes Ishmael as a great nation himself, today understood to be the Arab nation.

QUESTIONS

Why is the marriage of Abraham and Sarah an important model for us?

Why is Sarah in particular a role model for Godly women?

What lesson is there with Hagar, Ishmael, Sarah and Isaac per Galatians 4:21-31

SUMMARY

The pinnacle of the story of Abraham is the sacrifice of Isaac. We are told in James 2:21-23 that this moment confirmed his faith, a faith that James points to from chapters before as being conceived by his belief in God's promise. It is interesting to consider the significance of the location of the sacrifice. The Mountains of Moriah are identified as the same Mt. Moriah that Solomon would build the temple on in 2 Chronicles 3:1. That mount was purchased by David to build an altar to end a plague on Israel.

This great test was to confirm that Abraham loved God more than anything else, even his own son. God said *"For now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me"*. That idea can be seen in the teaching of Jesus in Luke 14:26 when He says *"If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple"*. We must love God above all things in this life.

It is often seen that Isaac is a form of Jesus in being sacrifices. We are told in Hebrews 11 that he is a type of resurrection, and he is spoken of as an only begotten son in the New Testament, just like Jesus. There is something to the idea that God put Abraham into the position of offering a similar sacrifice to that of His own.

But there is also something to the idea that we are like Isaac. Galatians 4:28 identifies Isaac with us. Consider the name of the mountain given by Abraham; the Mountain where God provides. The ram was what God provided, a lamb from God. Jesus is the Lamb of God, slain for us in our place. Thus we can see that Isaac is also an image of those for whom Jesus died.

Genesis 23 records the death of Sarah. Some tie this directly with the sacrifice of Isaac; Sarah died as Abraham led Isaac away. Scriptures do not state this, but it is a very old tradition. Abraham negotiates for a tomb for her, his only land possession in Canaan.

Canaan was a land which was condemned. God had promised it to Abraham, and in time his descendants would wipe out the people there. So why would he buy this place, and insist on a fair price? Indeed, this is the one place that Abraham bought, and later Jews might point to that and say it was one of only two places that they bought, and did not conquer. But perhaps there is a parallel to our world. This world is like Canaan; it will soon be destroyed. Yet we must have a place in it for our dying bodies while we are here. Therefore, we are permitted to live in the world, to have homes and lives in this place. As Jesus said in John 17, we are not of the world, but we must live in it.

QUESTIONS

Approximately how old was Isaac in this event?

What did Abraham believe about Isaac per Hebrews 11:19?

Why would God ask Abraham to make this sacrifice?

Why might this final test be necessary?

Why might God say "now I know"?

SUMMARY

Abraham did many great works of faith in His life. Genesis 24 records his last work. He knew that for the seed promise to be fulfilled, Isaac needed a wife. So he commissioned his faithful servant to find that wife for him. He sent him back to the land of his father, and there the servant found Rebekah. She returned, and became the wife of Isaac.

Abraham knew how important it was for Isaac to find the right spouse. God has said that it is not good to be alone (Gen. 2) and that if a man finds a good wife, he is blessed (Prov. 31). This is important, and Abraham took this endeavor seriously.

Abraham feared that Isaac would take a wife from the Canaanites. Later we see Esau do this, to his families consternation. Canaan could be seen as the world; we ought not to look for the right spouse in the world. Don't look in the wrong places for your spouse.

The servant was charged with something quite serious, and we see his concern in fulfilling this command. Abraham reassured him by telling him that God would be part of this. We are told that we are permitted to pray for things within the will of God. God's will is that we are married with the purpose and intent of having godly homes (Mal. 2:15). We need to learn to trust God and wait on the Lord.

Abraham's servant took a great deal of wealth to offer for this marriage. We need to have something to offer someone else to become our spouse. A man needs to have a profession and a way to support a home (Prov. 24:27). A woman needs to prepare herself as a help meet compatible to the man she seeks; she needs to be spiritual competent to be the guardian of the home (Tit. 2:5). Make sure you have something good to offer.

It is not enough to know the wrong place to look, but there needed to be direction and effort in getting to the correct place. We will only find spiritual people in spiritual places. Know the right place to look.

What made Rebekah stand out was her willingness to work. Marriage is work; it is a constant effort and sacrifice. Perhaps in this single deed her most valuable assets were revealed. The right person is not afraid to work. Clearly Abraham's servant was not the man she meant to marry. But Rebekah was kind to him without thinking of a return for that kindness. For this she became a kind of queen. Always be kind; you may be looking at your future in an indirect way. Be kind – your future could be at a camel trough.

The remaining part of the story speaks of Rebekah leaving her home to join her husband (consider Gen. 2:24). She would now join the greatest story in history, and become a vessel of the seed promise. Her brothers rightly said of her as she left: "*Our sister, may you come to be thousands of myriads, and may your offspring inherit the gate of its foes.*"

QUESTIONS

Why might Abraham send his servant and not Isaac himself?

Why return to the people of Aram?

What characteristics did the servant see in Rebecca?

Today, where is the right place to look for a mate?

Today, what should we expect in asking God for help?

SUMMARY

Genesis 25 begins the second act of the book of Genesis: the life of Jacob. Isaac is important, and he was a man of God, but the patriarchal story is meant to focus on Abraham, Jacob and Joseph. Genesis 25 moves from Abraham's death (when Isaac was 75) to the birth of his sons (when he was 60). Because he was born first, Esau was the Heir to the Promise (Esau – "Rough"; Edom – "Red" (Adam)). Jacob was the one who wanted the promise (Jacob – "Heel catcher"). Scriptures say that Esau was a man of the field; which may be a comparison to the world. Jacob was a "plain" (literally "integrity") man, or also a man of peace. Thus we have our two men, the man of the world and the man of integrity.

The story of the trade for the birthright seems almost trivial at first, but it is anything but trivial. In exchanging the birthright, Esau committed a very great evil. Scriptures tell us that in that moment God rejected Esau. Later we will read about Jacob deceiving his father for the blessing, but the scriptures are trying to tell us that in all these things Jacob did not cheat Esau; Esau insulted God. This story is important in the New Testament for setting the stage for two important ideas: the story of God loving Israel the nation, and the story of the Christian who falls away.

Genesis 26 is a record about Isaac. To begin with, we see God order Isaac not to go to Egypt (contrasted by his father and son's journeys there). This might be seen as Isaac's covenant commandment, that he sojourn in Canaan and never enter Egypt. Instead, Isaac travels to the Philistines, and we hear a story that sounds very much like his father, with men desiring his wife and Isaac lying to protect them. This has difficult consequences for Abimelech, who has been lied to the same way by Isaac's father Abraham. As we see in the next class, lies have consequences.

But after this God speaks to Isaac and reaffirms the covenant promises. Soon after the Philistine King comes again to Isaac and seeks a covenant with him. Perhaps this is why the Philistines are not among those to be wiped out by the Israelites?

Lastly, we get an important tidbit about Esau. He has married two of the women of Canaan. This speaks volumes to Esau's character, and why it is that soon Isaac will send Jacob away to find a wife.

QUESTIONS

What was the blessing of the firstborn?

What kind of man was Esau? What kind of man was Jacob?

According to the Scriptures, what did Esau do to his birthright?

How is Esau the model of a Christian who falls away?

SUMMARY

Genesis 27 is a disappointing look at the patriarchs Isaac, Rebekah, Jacob and Esau. It is disappointing because it reveals the worst of them; Jacob is a liar, Rebekah is a plotter, Isaac is foolish and Esau fails to see the truth. One wonders why Rebekah simply did not tell Isaac of the message of God related in Genesis 25, or why Isaac failed to inquire of God when giving God's blessing; why did Jacob refuse the deception, or Esau realize that this was the result of his foolish behavior?

Is it possible that lying was acceptable before God? The patriarchs lied on multiple occasions; they might have defended that by saying these were necessary lies. Abraham and Isaac lied for their protection; Jacob lied to get what God said was His, he lied to his father-in-law to return to the land God called him, and Simeon & Levi lied to get justice. If there are good reasons to lie, these may have been some. But even if not, there are times in Scripture where it seems that lies accomplished the will of God. There are the Israelite midwives (Ex. 1), and Rahab protecting the spies (Josh. 2). These last two have been cited as evidence that there might be a righteous lie; theologian Martin Luther once said "*a good hearty lie for the sake of the good and for the Christian Church, a lie in case of necessity, a useful lie.*" Such lies "*would not be against God.*"

The Old Testament often lacks a moral commentary, as opposed to the New Testament. It is often a record of historical events without a moral declaration. An example of this is when Esau despised his birthright. It is not commented on in Genesis, but in the New Testament we are told it was evil (Hebrews 12:16). This does not mean the Old Testament is without moral statement; in fact, almost all things have moral implications based on consequences.

This is an important contrast with the New Testament. An important fact Paul brings up in Acts 17:30 is that God's revelation no longer leaves ambiguity. The New Testament is filled with moral commentary by design. Simply look at the first lie in the church age, Ananias and Saphira. The New Testament texts are full of admonitions not to lie ("*Do not lie*" – Colossians 3:9, Ephesians 4:24). In the New Covenant, consequences are no longer a teaching tool; all things are revealed by the Word of God.

If consequences were the method of revealing morality in the Old Testament we ought to look back to the lies we have seen and ask what the consequences were. Abraham lies (TWICE) about Sarah, and Pharaoh & Abimelech were struck with plagues; Isaac lied about Rebekah, and Abimelech warns he was nearly cursed; Jacob lied to his father, and his brother hated him and sought to kill him; Jacob lied to his father-in-law, and his father in law pursued him intended to harm; finally, Simeon & Levi lied to Hamor, and Jacob's reputation and safety were destroyed.

The big idea from here on is this: God did not condone Jacob's lying, but God DID approve of his desires. We see that in the Old Testament God overlooked the flaws of men (David, Moses, Samuel, Hezekiah, Josiah, etc) because FAITH is the credit of righteousness – Romans 4:3. This is still true today; those who live by faith are seen by God not in their sins, but with a credited righteousness.

QUESTIONS

Why is it the Old Testament makes little moral commentary in contrast to the New Testament?

Is there such a thing as a moral lie?

What was Rebekah's moral flaw?

What was Esau's moral flaw?

What was Jacob's moral flaw?

Did Jacob steal the birthright in the eyes of God?

SUMMARY

Genesis 28 tells the story of Jacob's departure from his parents home. He is sent to Haran in Paddam Aram for two reasons: first, to avoid Esau, who wants to kill him. Second, he is to go there to find a wife; the error of Esau's choices in wives (from the Canaanites) is painfully clear to Isaac and Rebekah. So He leaves home with the blessing of Abraham and journeys alone north.

One night, as he is near the city of Luz, he rests and dreams of a great ladder to heaven. Angels ascend and descend, and at the top is God, who speaks to Him. When he awakens, he makes the pledge to be a servant of the one true God, and changes the name of the location to the house of God, Bethel. God reinstitutes the promise of Abraham to him. Thus Jacob becomes a believer.

It is his dream that is the most important part of the chapter. He sees a ladder (the word might mean a number of things akin to a ladder, but to be clear it is a joining of heaven and earth). He sees angels going up and coming down; angels are ministering spirits to God's elect (Hebrews 1:14) who will greet Jacob again later (Gen. 32:1).

What was the meaning of the ladder? It is revealed in the New Testament, in John 1:45-51, when one of Jacob's descendants (1:47) makes the confession of faith (1:49), that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. With this confession Jesus reveals the meaning of the ladder: *"hereafter you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man."* The Son of Man IS the Ladder, the connection between heaven and earth.

Not only this, but the statements made by Jacob are related to the works of Christ. He declares the base of the ladder to be the House of God, and the entrance to heaven. In John 10, Jesus uses this language again when He declares in verses 7-9 that *"I am the door* (or *"gate")*. The House of God is none other than the church that Jesus built (1 Timothy 3:15). We are told that in the church is a myriad of angels (Heb. 12:22-25) coming from the place from whence God speaks.

Jacob was bearing witness to Christ's work. The blessing of Abraham, which God makes again to Him, is the blessing that would be on all nations, the Ladder that is Christ. This witness caused his conversion; he made a promise and vow to God.

The dream of Jacob's Ladder is one of six times God speaks to Jacob, which will occur over the course of nearly 100 years (nearly half of the book of Genesis). It establishes the idea that Jacob will be one of the most important patriarchs. He is by no means perfect, but he is full of faith, and the big idea of the life of Jacob is that faith can be credited as spiritual perfection.

QUESTIONS

Why did Jacob leave?

How did Jacob travel? Why is this significant?

What is the significance of the place "Bethel" (both its name and later history)?

How does Jacob's ladder connect to the events in John 1:45-51?

SUMMARY

Genesis 29-30 tells the story of the family of Jacob. Jacob becomes the father of twelve sons and one daughter through two wives and two concubines (slaves). These sons have an equal share (except the birthright inheritor) despite the very unequal circumstances of their mothers.

The situation of Jacob having multiple wives and concubines (slave marriages) is a major moral dilemma. It is called polygamy. In Genesis 2:24 we are told God's design of marriage: one man, one woman for one life. We also see in Genesis 20:3 that when another tries to enter it, it is adultery, and it is a sin worthy of death. In Genesis 4:19 the first polygamist is seen, and we see that he was an unholy man. Finally, in general, polygamy made problems for the patriarchs (Abraham & Sarah, Jacob & Rachel & Leah). But polygamy is never directly condemned, and seems to be indirectly tolerated.

In the law of Moses, we are surprised to see that there is actually a codification of a "legal" polygamy. We see this in the Law of Moses in Deuteronomy 21:15, and even the problem of David in 2 Samuel 12:8. Polygamy is not the only Old Law marriage problem; there are slave marriages/concubines; there are sexual assault (?) marriages (consider the absence of condemnation of fornication), and there is the certificate of divorce issued in the Old Law.

The Law of Christ does not permit polygamy, concubines, or provide a certificate of divorce. Jesus teaches this in Matthew 19:3-9 when Jesus issues HIS law on the matter (which returns to the original intent and purposes). Today polygamy violates this law. While Jesus was particularly addressing the certificate of divorce, it indirectly invalidates polygamy too. In the end, Jacob's messy marriage is yet another example of the imperfections of the Old Testament that were rectified in the New Testament. God USED these circumstances; God NEVER approved of them.

As Genesis 31 picks up, Jacob is not dealt with fairly by his father-in-law, and his brother in laws are grumbling. Jacob has used animal husbandry techniques to breed the better livestock. Chapter 31 begins *"Jacob heard the words of Laban's sons, saying, 'Jacob has taken away all that was our father's, and from what was our father's he has acquired all this wealth.' And Jacob saw the countenance of Laban, and indeed it was not favorable toward him as before."*

In this moment God appears to Jacob again and tells him to return him. Jacob leaves with all that he has, and Laban pursues. God then appears to Laban, warning him to let Jacob go. Thus Jacob returns home.

QUESTIONS

Describe Leah and describe Rachel. Who might seem to be more Godly woman?

What kind of man was Laban?

What did Rachel do when fleeing Laban?

Why might God have permitted (winked at) polygamy in the Old Testament?

What other marriage laws existed in the Old Testament that were ended with Christ?

What was the complaint of: Laban; Laban's sons; Jacob; Leah and Rachel?

SUMMARY

Genesis 32 begins with Jacob worrying over the consequences of his earlier betrayal of Esau. His concern is how Esau will behave. Jacob is coming home after decades away as a rich man, and when he left his brother wanted to kill him. Amidst this worry he send a gift ahead to Esau, and sleeps alone that night. In Genesis 32:19-32 a remarkable event occurs: Jacob wrestles all night with God. Often it is identified as an angel (although He is only called a man). But when Jacob realizes what had happened, he declared that he had seen God face to face and lived. He was given a new name that night: Israel "Strives with God".

There is an important truth here. God' loves wrestlers. Remember that we are told that God loved Jacob. It is wrapped up in how Jacob has pursued blessings from God. We know he did this in despicable ways; in trading from his brother, deceiving his father, and in working for his father in law. But this is the moment where he is before God, and there is a chance God will depart without bestowing a blessing. Jacob chose to wrestle God for a blessing. Even when he had "lost": with an injury, he would not let God. This is why God loved Jacob; because Jacob wanted God's blessing desperately. God loves those who love him and will do anything to be with Him. Consider those such as Rahab, Tamar and others who have such a mind.

This is the characteristic we need to have. Meaning, we need to be willing to FIGHT for God's blessings. Consider fighting for your salvation; in 2 Corinthians 10:4-5 (and elsewhere) we are told that we are engaged in spiritual war. We need to fight for your salvation against the flesh (2 Pet. 2:11) and against temptation; we need to war against weakness (Gal. 4:9); we need to stand up against deception (2 Cor. 10:5) and ignorance.

Genesis 33 records the reconciliation of Jacob and Esau. They had been at odds since Jacob had received the blessing of Isaac in Genesis 27. At that time Esau, feeling that he had been cheated by his brother, had vowed to kill his brother. This is why Jacob had fled to Haran in the north (Gen. 27:42-44). Jacob leads his family to meet his brother. The result was a beautiful reconciliation. So pleased was Jacob that he had been received by his brother that he said "*I see your face as one sees the face of God, and you have received me favorably*" (Gen. 33:10).

Why did Jacob make peace in the first place? Did he owe Esau an apology? Esau had despised his birthright (Gen. 25:34). At that moment, God rejected Esau, and lost the blessing that he later wanted to receive. Jacob did not rob or cheat Esau, the blessing belonged to him. The deception was not against Esau, but his father Isaac. It was to Isaac any apology was owed, and that by Rebekah, not Jacob (Gen. 27:13). Jacob sought reconciliation not because he was at fault, but simply because it was right. He WANTED to live at peace with his brother.

Jacob's reconciliation with Esau is an important lesson on peacemaking for those of the covenant of Christ. In Matthew 5:9 Jesus tells us "*Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.*" This is a lesson to us on reconciliation when there is conflict.

QUESTIONS

Why did Jacob fight the Man? Did He fight an Angel or God Himself?

Why did God bless Jacob?

God says elsewhere that He "hates Esau". What does that mean?

What lessons can we learn about making peace from Jacob?

SUMMARY

Genesis 34 begins with Dinah, Jacob's only daughter, and her relationship with the Hivite Prince Shechem. There is much debate as to whether this was an act of rape or of mutual interest. But Shechem seeks Dinah as his wife, and his father Hamor and Jacob agree, with the condition set by her brothers being circumcision.

This is a lie; as the men of the city are recovering from the circumcision, Levi and Simeon attach the town and killed all of the men in town. When Jacob is old, he refuses to let the birthright blessing (lost by Rueben) pass to them for this evil deed.

Genesis 35 may be a composite of multiple events in the life of Jacob placed into one chapter. At the beginning it seems that this takes place after Jacob has met with Esau, but it may also be a refresher of Jacob's first meeting with God, then his return from Paddam-Aram. Whatever the timetable, it really contains two parts: Jacob called to Bethel by God, and some of the difficult events in the life of Jacob.

The call to Bethel may well be looking at all of the difficult events in Jacob's life. Ahead of these difficult moments God calls Jacob to worship at Bethel; He calls Jacob back to the covenant and reaffirms that Jacob is His own. This may be meant to sustain or encourage Jacob so that he does not feel forsaken in the coming years. When called to Bethel, Jacob prepares himself and his family in three ways. First he order the removal (and burial) of all idols in his home. Second, he order the purification of his home. Finally, he orders that new garments be put on (a symbol of renewal).

Further in this chapter Jacob loses his beloved wife Rachel, his father Isaac will die, and his mother's nurse Deborah will die. Additionally, his firstborn son will violate his household sanctity by having an intimate relationship with Bilhah, his concubine, and thus lose his birthright. With all of this there is little wonder why at the end of his life Jacob would say to Pharaoh: *"The years of my sojourning are one hundred and thirty; few and unpleasant have been the years of my life...."* (Genesis 47:9).

Chapter 36 tells us of the lineage of the Edomites. The Edomites will last nearly to the time of Christ, with the name *"Idumenean"* given by the Romans. They too are a nation bless by God, warned repeatedly by prophets and ultimately destroyed for their idolatry. Esau's grandson Amalek became a nation too, persecuting and being destroyed later by Israel.

QUESTIONS

Was the act of Levi and Simeon evil?

How is the preparation by Jacob at Bethel a lesson for us to consider in worshipping God?

What events in Jacob's life make him describe it as being evil years?

What life lessons would you point to with Jacob, both good and evil?

SUMMARY

Genesis 37 covers the story of Joseph being sold into slavery. The story begins by introducing Joseph as a teenager who is in contention with his brothers. Jacob placed clear favoritism on Joseph (as he had on his mother), and the consequences of that brought strife. To add to it, Joseph keeps saying things to make his brothers angry. Joseph may not have sinned (or perhaps he did by boasting) in the things he said, but we must see that Joseph said things that provoked his brothers. Finally, his brothers are moved by jealousy and envy to murder and enslave their brother. Jealousy is not just bad, it is also deadly. In this instance and many others, it led to an attempt to murder.

Jacob created a terrible condition by showing his favor to Joseph when it was not appropriate. Perhaps this is why Joseph was foolish in his speech. In James 2:1-12, James condemned the showing of partiality and favoritism. We must be careful not to show favoritism among brethren. In Matthew 25:31-46 Jesus described the judgment of believers; there He declared that if we did not serve the "Least of your brethren", we failed Him. We must not merely be kind to those who are easiest to engage, but to every single one of our spiritual family members (again, the local church).

In James 3 James warns us of the dangers of jealousy, envy and selfish ambition. Such feelings were clear in the brothers of Joseph. James then describes warring and murder in chapter 4 that result from jealousy. Families need to love each other, to rejoice when others are blessed, and to put away jealousy and envy. Our Heavenly Father gives all of us different gifts (1 Cor. 12:4-11); we need to be glad for what we have, not envious of what we do not.

Genesis 38 is one of the more graphic chapters in the story of the patriarchs. In this chapter we are told the story of the family of Judah. Judah (by a Canaanite wife) has three sons. The first is of such evil that he is struck dead by God. The second refuses to impregnate the widow of the first, and yet still engages in sexual relations with her, committing a form of technical rape. He too is struck dead by God. The last son is held dear by Judah. Judah denies this last son to Tamar, the widow of his oldest son, although the tradition is that she ought to be allowed to take him as her husband.

It is in this setting that Tamar comes up with a plan to secure her place in the family of Jacob. She disguises herself as a shrine prostitute and is encountered by Judah, who impregnates her. She takes from him his seal and other items. When months later it is discovered she is pregnant, Judah prepares to have her put to death. She delivers his pledges, and Judah realizes his hypocrisy, and declares Tamar righteous. She gives (auspicious) birth to twins, the oldest of whom will receive the Abrahamic blessing of the Christ promise.

QUESTIONS

Describe the errors of: Jacob; Joseph; Joseph's brothers

Was Joseph guilty of provoking his brothers?

Who was Joseph sold to in slavery?

What was Tamar's nationality?

Why might Matthew 1 identify Tamar in the lineage of Jesus?

Why might Tamar have been invoked as a blessing on Ruth in Ruth 4:12?

SUMMARY

Genesis 39 begins again the story of Joseph, a slave in Egypt. In this situation he rises as a servant in the house of Pharaoh's guard Potiphar. Potiphar's house is blessed by God because of this good service. Unfortunately, it also catches the attention of Potiphar's wife. While Joseph is the very example of virtue, she falsely accuses him of impropriety, and the chapter concludes with Joseph cast into prison, and yet even there working hard in his position.

There are a number of characteristics about Joseph that make him a model for Christian conduct. In this chapter we see two of his greater virtues displayed: his willingness to be a servant and his focus on personal purity. Both of these characteristics are core virtues.

Joseph's role model as a servant is striking. Consider first of all that his situation might warrant bitterness and hatred for the one whom he serves. He has been sold into slavery immorally. He was once son of a rich man, who probably had men serve him. Now he is a slave to a godless man. Yet rather than seek to free himself or run away, Joseph sets his purpose to the service of the house of Potiphar.

But perhaps Joseph is better known for his behavior with Potiphar's wife. We see two remarkable things; first, Joseph's absolute determination not to forsake his purity, which he says would be evil before God. Second, that Joseph suffers for this determination. This is especially striking in contrast to the behavior of Judah in the preceding chapter.

Genesis 40 moves on with Joseph as a foreign slave *in prison* perhaps the most deplorable condition a person might be in in the ancient world. But Joseph used his opportunities in those situation and was raised up to be Prime Minister of Egypt. How?

First, Joseph remained faithful in all circumstances. Joseph was in prison for being righteous. As a foreigner, he had no people of fellowship. Still, in this terrible place, Joseph remained faithful to God. He demonstrated this by serving his new "master" just as well as the old. No matter the circumstances stay faithful (Revelation 2:10). Even when it appears that there is no benefit to being faithful, be faithful; God is always present and working in your life.

Second, Joseph did not focus on the past. Joseph had been betrayed by everyone whom he had served; his family, then Potiphar. Yet even then he does not come across as grudge holding against those who hurt him. Don't focus on the past, but instead look to the future (Philippians 3:13). Don't get caught up in all the bad things that have happened to you.

Third, Joseph made opportunity by helping others. Egyptians were not kind to his people (Gen. 43:32). Yet here in prison he helped two men in need. Be ready to help anyone in need (Hebrews 13:2). Helping others even if it does not seem to benefit us can still benefit us.

Fourth, Joseph made plans to succeed. Even though God had promised this success and used him, it was still up to Joseph to plan to use God had revealed. We understand that faith without works is dead; so did Joseph!

QUESTIONS

What attitudes account for Joseph's success in Potiphar's house?

Why did Joseph flee Potiphar's wife in the manner he did?

How did Joseph remain faithful in prison?

Why might Joseph have never lost heart?

SUMMARY

The word "Pharaoh" means "great house". It refers to the king of Egypt, which in the time of Joseph (perhaps 1700 BC?) was the greatest nation in the entire world. We do not know which Pharaoh this is (Sensu I? Thutmose IV?), but he is likely young, as Joseph will receive a title "Father of Pharaoh" in Genesis 45:8. Pharaoh has had a dream, and his advisors are honest enough to tell them that they do not know what it means (consider Nebuchadnezzar's advisors in Daniel 2).

It is at this point that the cupbearer recalls being in prison with Joseph and Joseph interpreting their dreams. Thus Joseph, now 30 years old, is brought in, and Joseph tells Pharaoh that God is revealing to him the next fourteen years; seven of plenty, seven of famine. Joseph goes further to recommend that Pharaoh appoint someone to administer the preparations for this time, an indication of his logistical knowledge overseeing first Potiphar's home and later the prison.

Pharaoh recognizes that Joseph is a man in whom is the Spirit of God (Daniel 4:8-9, 5:11), he and his advisors believe Joseph and put him in charge as the chief minister of Egypt. No one has more authority than Joseph in this land, and Joseph wisely administers the land. In the course of this time he has two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh.

Joseph presents us with several important lessons. First, as mentioned before, don't give up. Joseph has now been a slave or prisoner for thirteen years, and has not lost his since of propriety or purpose. Joseph was ready to speak when years later he was remembered.

Second, Joseph never sees himself as the means of success, but God. When we consider the names of his sons, we see that Joseph does not look back at his difficulties, but looks at his success and blessings. Attitude is everything, and Joseph is nothing if not an example of constantly having the right attitude.

Finally, consider that Joseph is competent to lay by in store for difficult times. We too ought to prepare ourselves for difficulties in our futures. This is not merely a financial thought, but one of faith. If we know that we will face tests and tribulation in serving Christ, we must prepare now the spiritual resources to overcome those days.

QUESTIONS

In the Old Testament, who else had dreams sent from God?

Why did God send Pharaoh two dreams?

Why might Pharaoh have believed Joseph?

How much grain did Joseph collect?

Joseph was a blessed son who lost all, was hated by his brethren, became a servant, and was finally exalted because of his faithfulness. Who is this like?

CLASS 23: Genesis 42-45 and Joseph's Brothers	June 7, 2023
<p>SUMMARY</p> <p>The story of Joseph is important to the believer in Christ because it is the story of the virtues of Christ manifested. But the best part of the story of Joseph is the story of forgiveness, which is the heart of the Gospel.</p> <p>Genesis 42 begins with a worldwide famine. Joseph is the prime minister of Egypt, and his brothers come to Egypt to obtain food. When they arrive, they do not know Joseph, but he knows them. It is clear that Joseph WANTED to forgive his brothers, but his testing in 42-44 is because he needed to test them to TRUST them. Chapters 43-44 describe these tests; first, the imprisonment of Simeon as a hostage to compel them to return with Benjamin. Then when they do so, the test is to accuse Benjamin of stealing. Judah (the man who came up with the plan to enslave Joseph) offers himself as a slave to Pharaoh in his place. This last act of sacrifice convinces Joseph the time to reveal himself has come.</p> <p>Genesis 45:1-15 is the story of Joseph forgiving his brothers. There are three things to consider in how Joseph was able to forgive them. First, he saw the bigger picture. Second, he (still) loved his brothers. Finally, he loved his father, and wanted to see his face.</p> <p>Forgiving like Joseph means learning about forgiveness. Trust is NOT forgiveness; sometimes people misunderstand and believe they are the same. Joseph's brothers had to earn his trust, NOT his forgiveness. Forgiveness is not earned; they did not repay their deeds. That is the meaning of forgiveness. Forgiveness requires understanding; getting a sense of a purpose for what happened and a mind in sympathy with those who sinned.</p> <p>The conclusion of Joseph's work created a place for the children of Israel. It also resulted in the restoration of a son to his father. These things help again for us to see the parallel in the lives of Joseph and Jesus: Two men beloved of Their Father, Divinely ordained/prophesied to rule; the jealousy and hatred of Their brethren; the decision to be rid of him for pieces of silver; and finally, an absolute forgiveness for what they had done to him based on a similar theme: "You did not know what you were doing".</p> <p>Ultimately, the theme of Joseph and Jesus is identical. (1) The Rejected One is exalted - He was dead, but he lives again; (2) The Exalted One saves his people - He was raised up ruler of all; (3) His offer: "Come to me and I'll give you all your needs"</p> <p>QUESTIONS</p> <p><i>What events had perhaps softened his brothers in Joseph's absence?</i></p> <p><i>How did Joseph's tests reveal their character?</i></p> <p><i>Why was Joseph particularly interested in seeing Benjamin?</i></p> <p><i>Why did Joseph eat separate from his brothers?</i></p> <p><i>How did his brothers react when he revealed himself?</i></p> <p><i>How did Jacob react when he heard of Joseph?</i></p>	

SUMMARY

Jacob prepares to go to the land of Egypt. We might recall that while his grandfather Abraham had sojourned there, his father Isaac had been forbidden to do so. Thus Jacob speaks to God at Beersheba, who tells him that he is to go into Egypt and remain until his death (*"Joseph will close your eyes"*). Thus Jacob, at 130, prepares his last journey.

Scripture often give us numbers to help us picture moments. The caravan number 70 does not seem to have included Jacob's wife Leah, Zilpah or Bilhah. Jacob mentions later that Leah is buried at the cave of Machpelah. Instead the number reflects the direct descendants of Jacob, his children and grandchildren.

Judah leads the caravan to Goshen, and there Jacob and Joseph are reunited after nearly 30 years apart. Jacob's declaration is that now that he has seen Joseph he can die. Yet Joseph needs his father to establish his family. Joseph instructs his father to speak to Pharaoh and describe his vocation as a shepherd. This profession was loathed by the Egyptians, yet clearly necessary. Thus he gets his family a place in Egypt that serve them and the nation both.

Chapter 47 continues with Jacob meeting Pharaoh. It is interesting that the sons of Israel call themselves Pharaoh's servants; at that time Canaan was nominally under Egyptian oversight (46:14). Pharaoh grants them leave to move to Goshen and take control of his livestock. The meeting of Jacob and Pharaoh occurs with Jacob blessing Pharaoh and describing his life to him.

The last part of the chapter again reflects on Joseph's ability to manage those things under his stewardship. The famine has cause a financial crisis among the people, and Joseph begins a policy of first exchanging livestock for food, then exchanging the land for food. But Joseph is not doing this to their detriment; instead, he restores these things to the people with the understanding that from that time on such royal granted land obligated a royal fifth to be returned to the Pharaoh. This royal fifth will be practiced by many nations for several thousand years.

QUESTIONS

What do we know about Beersheba?

Why does God identify Himself as "God of your father"?

What are the things mentioned in Genesis 43:32 and 46:34 as abominations to the Egyptians?

How might these abominations lead to the events of Exodus 1?

Why might Judah be the one leading the children of Israel here?

How did Jacob describe his age and his life?

How long did Jacob live in Egypt?

SUMMARY

The end of Jacob's life is found in Genesis 47:28 through 49:2. Most of the text discusses the blessing of the sons of Jacob. We can note that Joseph received the double allotment of the firstborn (we already discussed that it passed over the first born because of Rueben's infidelity, and it passed Simeon and Levi over their violence). The seed promise and the firstborn allotment are broken up; Judah receives the seed promise, and Joseph's two sons receive an equal allotment from Jacob. We note too that there was another "switch" on which sons received promises. In summary, *He blessed them, every one with the blessing appropriate to him* – Genesis 49:28.

But it is interesting to note that in the New Testament book of Hebrews, when it comes to describing the faith of the patriarchs, it is this moment that is identified as the moment of faith for Jacob. *By faith Jacob, as he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, and worshiped, leaning on the top of his staff* (Hebrews 11:21). Why was THIS the work of faith shown for his life? Not all of the other experiences he had, such as wrestling God, wandering in Canaan, or his constant desire for the blessing of God. It was raising up on his bed post/staff and blessing his children at death that the Hebrew writers says was the act of faith to consider.

Perhaps we should consider that faith in this moment; Jacob believed in all God had promised. But his faith was in contrast with the circumstances. He was dying in Egypt; Egypt looked like a promised land (and Canaan was a land of drought). It is clear that despite appearances, he believed that Canaan was the promised land from God.

Maybe there is more to this. Perhaps it was not just the idea of the land of Canaan that was the center of this faith, but perhaps a greater hope than this. The Hebrew writer already suggested that this was true of Jacob's grandfather Abraham; Abraham was not looking for a city made with hands, but was looking for an eternal home. Jacob hoped for even more than Canaan; he hoped for a heavenly home. *And all these, having gained approval through their faith, did not receive what was promised, because God had provided something better for us, so that apart from us they would not be made perfect* (Hebrews 11:39-40).

As we conclude Genesis we are being divinely nudged to the idea that these men walked by faith for eternal rewards. Even though it was never stated as such, they believed in a God who would restore to them life after death. Jesus told us of their reward in Matthew 8:11 *"I say to you that many will come from east and west, and recline at the table with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven"*. Even though they had not received the Gospel as we do, they too will be saved by the same Gospel.

QUESTIONS

Who received the double inheritance of the firstborn and why?

How did Jacob bless Joseph's sons? What is the irony of this blessing?

Who received the promise of Abraham and Isaac and why?

What was said of Benjamin?

What was said of Judah?

SUMMARY

The end of Genesis 49 sees the death of Israel/Jacob. He has requested that he be buried in the cave of Machpelah, and Joseph has Jacob embalmed in Egyptian fashion to deliver him there. His sons, and a great retinue travel to the local, prompting the locals to name the location the "Mourning of Egypt".

Upon their return Joseph's brothers discuss their dilemma; what if Joseph seeks to avenge himself on them? Now that their father is gone, perhaps their mercy is gone too. We see something similar in the death of David and Solomon's executions. But Joseph reassures them that (1) he is not in the place of God (as a judge) and (2) that clearly God meant for good in these events.

Joseph lives perhaps another 60 or 70 years before dying at 110. As he was dying, he instructs his family to deliver his bones to Canaan when they return. This is great act of faith that the Hebrew writer points to in Hebrews 11:22.

Genesis is the story of where humanity came from, and more specifically where Israel came from. Genesis is the story of grace, mercy, sin and death; we learn about the faith that pleases God and the sacrifices that will be received by God. We learn about the Christ, the church, baptism, blood, water and the Spirit of God.

QUESTIONS

Why is Jacob's blessings on the bed an act of faith per Hebrews 11?

Who all travels to Canaan for Jacob's funeral?

Did Joseph's brothers lie to Joseph about their father's wishes?

Why is Joseph's directions about his body an act of faith per Hebrews 11?

Approximately how long will the Israelites remain in Egypt after Joseph?

Who are the most important people in Genesis? Why?

Who are the most important women in Genesis? Why?

What did the patriarchs know about God? What did they not know?

What other patriarch of the Old Testament is NOT mentioned in Genesis?