

Revised & Expanded 2nd Edition

Bible History 1



Genesis thru Deuteronomy

Richard Rogers

SUNSET BIBLE STUDY LIBRARY

Bible History I

by Richard Rogers



3710 34th Street • Lubbock, Texas • 79410
800-687-2121 • www.extensionschool.com

Bible History I

© 2004, 2021 Sunset Institute Press

Copyright © 11/2004

Revisions © 2021

All rights reserved.

All Scripture quotations, unless indicated, are taken from
THE HOLY BIBLE: NEW INTERNATIONAL
VERSION®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 by International
Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan Publishing
House. All rights reserved.

Printed in the United States of America.

Cover Design: Beth E. Miller

Format & Edits: Darlene Morris

ISBN: 978-0-9755183-1-1

No part of this publication may be reproduced in any form
without the prior written permission of the publisher except
in the case of brief quotations within critical articles and
reviews.

This book is dedicated to

Cline Rex Paden

**Originator and Director of Sunset School of
Preaching for 32 years, who had enough
confidence in a young preacher to entrust to him
the task of training other preachers**

Special Acknowledgment

A “*special thank you*” to

Dr. A. D. and Sharron Smith

who made the original printing of this book possible

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Dedication

Preface

I.	Why Study the Old Testament.	1
II.	From the Creation to the Fall.	13
III.	The Mother Promise and Redemption.	26
IV.	The Aftermath of Conflict.	41
V.	From the Flood to Babel and the Old Testament World.	54
VI.	Palestine's Geography and Abraham's Journey (1).	70
VII.	Abraham's Journey (2).	84
VIII.	Abraham's Journey (3).	97
IX.	Abraham's Journey (4).	111
X.	Abraham's Journey (5).	126
XI.	Abraham's Journey (6)	141
XII.	Isaac and Jacob.	157
XIII.	The Servant in Paddan Aram.	173
XIV.	The Saint in Hebron.	188
XV.	The Account of Joseph (1).	202
XVI.	The Account of Joseph (2).	216
XVII.	The Account of Joseph (3).	230
XVIII.	The Account of Joseph (4).	244
XIX.	The Land of Captivity.	258
XX.	Wonders of Deliverance.	272
XXI.	The Exodus Experience (1).	290
XXII.	The Exodus Experience (2).	305
XXIII.	The Exodus Experience (3).	320
XXIV.	Conquest of the East Bank.	336

Maps of the Old Testament

Old Testament World: Bodies of Water, Rivers, and Countries.	67
Old Testament World: Mountain Ranges and Countries.....	68
Old Testament Palestine.	69
Abram's Journey from Ur to Hebron.....	83
Egypt, the Land of Captivity.	271
Exodus Wanderings.	335

SUNSET BIBLE STUDY LIBRARY BOOKS

1. Acts – Abe Lincoln
2. Apologetics 2 – Ted Stewart
3. Bible History 1 – Richard Rogers
4. Bible History 2 – Richard Rogers
5. Biblical Interpretation – Charles Speer
6. Biblical Theology of Missions – Richard Rogers
7. The Case for Historic Christianity – Ed Wharton
8. Christ and the Church – Ed Wharton
9. Christian Counseling, Introduction to – Truman Scott
10. Christian Home – Charles Speer
11. Colossians and Philemon – Bob Martin
12. 1 Corinthians – Abe Lincoln
13. 2 Corinthians – Abe Lincoln
14. Daniel – Ted Stewart
15. Ephesians – Gerald Paden
16. Excellence in Leadership – Richard Rogers
17. Hebrews – Gerald Paden
18. History of the Church in Acts – Richard Rogers
19. Isaiah – Richard Rogers
20. James, Epistle of – Ron Bontrager
21. Jeremiah – Dayton Keesee
22. John, Epistles of – Gerald Paden
23. John, The Gospel of – Doyle Gilliam
24. Leader Strong Churches – Truman Scott
25. Levitical Sacrificial System – Gerald Paden
26. Life of Christ – Richard Rogers
27. Minor Prophets — Richard Rogers
28. Peter, Epistles of – Ted Stewart
29. Philippians – Doyle Gilliam
30. The Power of Biblical Thinking – Ken Wilson
31. Psalms – Charles Speer
32. Redemption Is – Ed Wharton
33. Revelation – Richard Rogers

34. Romans – Charles Speer
35. Romans: Paid in Full – Richard Rogers
36. Shepherds Among the Sheep – Truman Scott
37. Spiritual Giftedness – Doug Hamilton
38. Spiritual Living for Ministers – Truman Scott
39. 1 & 2 Thessalonians – Doyle Gilliam
40. 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus – Tex Williams
41. Wisdom Literature – Charles Speer

Also Available as Part of the SIBI Courses are:

Christ and the Church – Ed Wharton
Basics to Christian Counseling – Ken Wilson
The Christian Home – Ken Wilson
Christianity: A Clear Case of History – Ed Wharton
The Church of Christ – Ed Wharton
Freed For Freedom (Galatians) – Ed Wharton
The Power of Biblical Thinking – Ken Wilson
Redemption Is – Ed Wharton

A companion workbook on the study of Bible History I by Richard Rogers is available for purchase through Sunset International Bible Institute External Studies: 1(800) 687-2121.

Preface to the *Sunset Bible Study Library*

Since 1962 Sunset International Bible Institute has been a leader in teaching God's Word, training local church leaders and preparing preachers and missionaries for effective ministry. Developed in the laboratory of preacher training and proven in the crucible of practical ministry, the Sunset curriculum has grown to forty core courses used both in our resident school and in distance learning applications. In 1989 the Sunset Video Studio was inaugurated to record each course of study in a professional format. Those courses, each with a companion study guide, have been used to teach thousands of individual students and develop a world-wide network of video satellite schools in local congregations and mission fields.

Now in printed form, that same library of trusted Bible study material is available through Sunset Institute Press for an even wider circle of Bible students, thanks to a benevolent God, an excellent editorial staff, and a number of faithful supporters who believed in the project.

This book is the result of a multi-step process which began with a videotaped course. The voice track of the videotape was first transcribed, then formatted and edited from spoken to written style. The goal of the editorial process has been to produce a readable document while protecting the course content and the style and personality of the teacher. We believe the goal has been achieved and that each of the forty books planned for the Sunset Bible Study Library will likewise achieve that goal.

Special gratitude must be expressed to Cline Paden and Truman Scott, who began the video course series in 1989; to Bob Martin, who directed Sunset Video Studio; to Virgil Yocham and the staff of Sunset External Studies Division, who

wrote the study guides; to Darlene Morris and the staff of Sunset Translation Center, who edited the manuscripts; and to each faculty member of Sunset International Bible Institute who took extra time to prepare and present these courses in the studio.

In addition to the English version, this book and its companion volumes are being translated into the major languages of the world to produce a Bible study library that can be used on the mission fields of the world to mature Christians, train church leaders, and grow churches that plant other churches.

Why Study the Old Testament

Introduction

Welcome to Sunset International Bible Institute's study of the Old Testament Bible History. This book will cover the history of the Old Testament of the Hebrew family and the history of the Hebrew nation.

The question is often asked, "Why study the Old Testament, and in particular, Old Testament History?" There seems to be a reluctance to study the Old Testament because the Law has ceased to be in effect. But the Old Testament is much more than the Law. It is the history of God dealing with His creation. It is the history of the creation itself, as well as the sovereign providence of God as He worked with man and the creation called the earth.

Seven Reasons For Studying Old Testament History

To begin, seven reasons for studying Old Testament history will be presented. In this way, the student will know from the beginning that this study has purpose and what the goals of the study are. A three point outline of the history of the Bible, both Old and New Testament will also be given. Then chapter by chapter this study will progress through the Old Testament time line, including a focus on the providence of the purpose of God. Why study the Old Testament, and in particular, why study Old Testament history? The following

seven reasons show why it is essential to study Old Testament history.

To Gain Wisdom and Equipment For Every Good Work

Reason number one is to gain wisdom and equipment for every good work. Second Timothy 3 gives the first reason for studying Old Testament history. Paul's charge to Timothy, his son in the gospel, is found in 2 Timothy 3:10–13:

You, however, know all about my teaching, my way of life, my purpose, faith, patience, love, endurance, persecutions, sufferings — what kinds of things happened to me in Antioch, Iconium and Lystra, the persecutions I endured. Yet the Lord rescued me from all of them. In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, while evil men and impostors will go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived.

Notice that Paul told Timothy “you … know.” Timothy had already learned several things from Paul: his teaching, the way he lived, his purpose, the faith he had, and patience. He also knew that knowing about Christ and wanting to live for Christ resulted in persecution. There was an alternative, however, which was being wicked and going from worse to worst. In 2 Timothy 3:14–15 Paul stressed Timothy’s knowledge of the Old Testament as being sufficient and necessary to make him wise unto salvation:

But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to

make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

When Paul wrote this epistle, most of the New Testament had not been written. The “*holy Scriptures*” that Timothy had known from infancy were the Old Testament Scriptures. Notice Paul said, “...from infancy you have known the *holy Scriptures*, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus” (2 Timothy 3:15). Stop for a moment and think about what he said. Paul said that if Timothy knew the Old Testament Scriptures, then those Old Testament Scriptures were “*able to make you wise for salvation.*” The Old Testament Scriptures are able to make people wise to salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. It is the Gospel and the rest of the New Testament that lead to faith in Jesus. So a knowledge of the Old Testament, coupled with the faith that the New Testament generates, is able to make Timothy, and therefore all people, wise to salvation. The “why” of this is found in 2 Timothy 3:16–17 when Paul wrote:

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

In 1 Timothy 5, Paul spoke of the elders being worthy of double honor. Paul said that Christians are supposed to support the elders who labor in preaching and teaching because the Scripture says, “*Do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain*” (Deuteronomy 25:4). Jesus said, “... *the worker deserves his wages...*” (Luke 10:7). In 1 Timothy 5, Paul made the Scriptures work together, both Deuteronomy and the Gospel of Luke, which had begun to be circulated by the time Paul wrote 1 Timothy. So the Scripture that is God-breathed is both the Old and the New Testament.

The idea that Scripture is God-breathed is not that God breathed on it, or that God breathed into it, but that God breathed it out. The Scripture is God's breath. It is His expiration, and it is Old Testament Scripture and New Testament Scripture combined that can make people wise unto salvation and thoroughly equipped unto every good work. Christians are not equipped for all the good work that God wants us to do if all we know is the New Testament. We must also know the Old Testament. That is why we study Old Testament history.

It Is the Background for the Study and Understanding of the New Testament

The second reason is that the Old Testament is the background for the study and the understanding of the New Testament. Acts 3:20–24 says:

“And that he may send the Christ, who has been appointed for you — even Jesus. He must remain in heaven until the time comes for God to restore everything, as he promised long ago through his holy prophets. For Moses said, ‘The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own people; you must listen to everything he tells you. Anyone who does not listen to him will be completely cut off from among his people.’ Indeed, all the prophets from Samuel on, as many as have spoken, have foretold these days.”

All of the Old Testament prophets, from Samuel through all of the men who heard God and spoke and wrote for Him, told of these Old Testament days.

Bible students cannot understand the New Testament without understanding the Old Testament, for the New is the

completion of the Old. It is the fulfillment of all the Old Testament prophecies. It is the reality of all of the Old Testament shadows. It is the explanation of all the Old Testament incompleteness, and it is the answer to all Old Testament questions. The New Testament is based on the Old.

It Points to Christ

The third reason is that the Old Testament points to Christ. The Old Testament Scripture is a finger that is pointing out that someone is coming down the line. In John 5:39, Jesus was in an argument with the Sadducees and other Jews about His right to say that He was God's Son, that He was the Son of man, that He was the Messiah, and that He was the One they had been looking for. John recorded that Jesus said: “*You diligently study the Scriptures [or, as a command: “study the Scriptures”] because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me.”*”

What “*Scriptures*” was He talking about? The only ones that existed in John 5 were the Old Testament Scriptures. Jesus was saying that the Old Testament Scriptures speak of Him. They speak about Him in type, in need, in song, in proverbs and in prophecy. All the Old Testament Scriptures speak of Jesus. In Acts 8, a eunuch from Ethiopia had been to worship as best he could in Jerusalem, and on his way home he was reading from a scroll of the prophet Isaiah. As he read, he began wondering who the prophet was talking about. Philip came and joined the eunuch: “*The eunuch asked Philip, ‘Tell me, please, who is the prophet talking about...’ Then Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus*” (Acts 8:34–35). It would not have mattered what Scripture the eunuch was reading. Any Scripture in the Old Testament points to Christ. And whatever he had been reading, he would have been wondering what it spoke about because it was not yet fulfilled. But Philip began from that Scripture and

preached to him about Jesus. People need to study the Old Testament to learn all the pointers, all the predictions, and all the prophecies about Christ.

It Is the Only Reliable History For That Period of Time

The fourth reason is not a biblical reason, but it is an important reason nonetheless. The Old Testament history is the only reliable history of that period of time. Will S. Durant, a historian and a philosopher, along with his wife Ariel, wrote a set of books called *The Story of Civilization*. In the first volume of that book, *Our Oriental Heritage*, which Will S. Durant wrote by himself, he discussed an ancient empire called Sumer. He said that the only accurate history of this period of time is found in the Old Testament Scriptures of the Bible. At that time, he was not even a true believer. He was searching, but he did not yet believe in God. He was not an atheist, but he was an agnostic who did not believe in God. Yet he said that the Old Testament is the only reliable history that men have of that period of time.

It is interesting that this shows that God recorded history when no one else did. God spoke of the Hittite nation when no one else did. He spoke of the Sumerians when no one else did. He told of things of which archaeologists have found evidence. Every single statement of Old Testament history has been proven not only to be correct, but to be in the right chronological and historical order. The Bible is the only reliable history for the old times.

To Gain Both Good and Bad Examples — How to Live and How Not to Live

The fifth reason Bible students need to study the Old Testament is to gain examples on how to live and how not to live. In James 5, James urged Christians to look to the prophets as an example of how to live. James 5:10–11 says:

Brothers, as an example of patience in the face of suffering, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. As you know, we consider blessed those who have persevered. You have heard of Job's perseverance and have seen what the Lord finally brought about. The Lord is full of compassion and mercy.

James said that Christians are to use the prophets as an example of how to endure trials, persecution, suffering, and ridicule. He indicated that they had heard of Job's patience. Those who have heard of Job's patience could take it to mean that he was a man who lived without complaining, that he just stoically put up with whatever came to him. He had the ability to bear things without trying to justify himself and with no accusation of God. But when one reads the Book of Job a different picture emerges. He was a person who complained about his circumstance in life. He was a leper sitting on a trash heap. He did not deserve to be there, and he complained to God: "Where are you, God? I look for you and I cannot find you. You fill me full of your arrows. I complain to you. I just wish you would come so you and I could debate this thing, and I would present my case."

A person might ask, "This is patience?" But James gave the end of the story. The final outcome was that Job finally turned it over to God. He said: "LORD, I don't understand this. I'm on this ash heap, and I don't think I deserve to be here, but I've got faith in you so I'm just going to sit here and wait for your answer." As soon as Job made that decision and repented of his sin of questioning God, he prayed for the friends who had ridiculed him and rebuked him, and he became rich twice over. He had twice as much at the end as he had had at the beginning.

Therefore, when trials come and Christians feel like complaining, they can take their complaints to God. They can complain to God, not about God, persevere, and keep their faith

in God. The Old Testament is really a life principle. It deals with how to work with the circumstances of life. In 1 Corinthians 10:1–6, Paul went into an even larger and longer discussion about this idea of the Old Testament being our example:

For I do not want you to be ignorant of the fact, brothers, that our forefathers were all under the cloud and that they all passed through the sea. They were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. They all ate the same spiritual food and drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ. Nevertheless, God was not pleased with most of them; their bodies were scattered over the desert. Now these things occurred as examples to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things as they did.

Paul gave a negative example, whereas James gave a positive example of the prophets and Job. Paul was exhibiting the Israelites as a negative example, that Christians should not do what they had done in the wilderness. What did they do? Paul wrote to the Corinthian Christians in 1 Corinthians 10:7–10.

Number 1: *Do not be idolaters, as some of them were; as it is written: “The people sat down to eat and drink and got up to indulge in pagan revelry.”*

Number 2: *We should not commit sexual immorality, as some of them did — and in one day twenty-three thousand of them died.*

Number 3: *We should not test the LORD, as some of them did — and were killed by snakes.*

Number 4: *And do not grumble, as some of them did — and were killed by the destroying angel.*

Paul said: “Do not be idolaters; do not be sexually immoral; do not test or try the Lord; and do not grumble about what the Lord is doing in your life. Learn from them not to do those things” — *“These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the fulfillment of the ages has come”* (1 Corinthians 10:11).

History is not written down for the people it happened to. It is written down for the people who will follow. James said:

“Brothers, as an example of patience in the face of suffering, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. As you know, we consider blessed those who have persevered. You have heard of Job’s perseverance and have seen what the Lord finally brought about. The Lord is full of compassion and mercy” (James 5:10–11).

And Paul said not to sin as they sinned. Men need to study Old Testament history to gain examples, both good and bad.

For Learning Patience, Comfort, and Hope

The sixth reason is to learn patience, comfort, and hope. In Romans 15:4 Paul made a blanket statement about what everything in the Old Testament was written to teach us. He wrote: *“For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope”* (NASB). Notice the word “whatever.” One version says, “All of the things,” and another says, “Everything.” Every single thing that was written in the Old Testament, whatever was written, was written for man’s learning. The Old Testament was not written for the Old Testament people. The Old

Testament was written for the people who came later. That is what Paul said. What is the Old Testament supposed to do for Christians? It is supposed to give us patience, comfort, and hope. How does it do that? It does that by presenting God's blessings upon Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. It does that by letting us look for a long time at the nations of Israel and Judah to see that every time they did good and right, God blessed them, and every time they did evil, God cursed them. It does that so that we can have hope that God, if He disciplines us with judgments, will do it only out of His love and to bring us to repentance. David was an example of what God does for a repenting sinner. Over and over again we are going to see people who enable us to hang in there even when everything else has let go. When it looks like God does not love us and is not for us, the Old Testament will tell us about other people in whose lives God has worked. If we were taken away, snatched away from our family into a foreign land, we have the example of Daniel, Esther, and others in captivity who were used greatly by God and fulfilled the work and the purpose of God. We will learn in the sacrificial system how all those things pointed to the death of Christ.

Bible students will see in the prophecies, even in the predictions of Israel and Judah's destruction, that there was a promise that God was still there and working on their behalf. The Messiah would come. No matter how black the night — “*...rejoicing comes in the morning*” (Psalm 30:5). That is what the Old Testament was written to say. Paul said every single thing in the Old Testament was written for one's example, learning, comfort, and patience (cf. Romans 15:4).

As a Bright Light Shining in a Dark Day

The seventh reason is that the Old Testament shines like a bright light in a dark day. Second Peter 1:16–18 says:

We did not follow cleverly invented stories [myths] when we told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received honor and glory from God the Father when the voice came to him from the Majestic Glory, saying, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.” We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain.

Notice that Peter said that he and the other apostles were firsthand witnesses of Jesus. They saw Him, they heard Him, and they touched Him. A good witness is an eyewitness. Second Peter 1:19–21 says:

And we have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it [the prophetic word] as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet’s own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

What is the word “*more certain*” than? It is “*more certain*” than if they had seen and heard it. The Old Testament, fulfilled prophetic word is “*more certain*” than if others had seen and heard it. Peter said that Christians have an eyewitness and an ear-witness, but we have a more certain witness than that because we have the word of the prophets.

This is one of the most interesting sections of Scripture in all the Bible, because to be an eyewitness — was to see Jesus as He healed the sick; to have an ear witness — was to hear as He preached the great Sermon on the Mount — must have been

above all the most fabulous experience of one's life, and it would be an experience perhaps beyond that. But men have a more sure witness than that. We have a more sure testimony to Jesus than if we had seen Him and heard Him, and that is the fulfilled Word of God. One of the main reasons Christians should study the Old Testament is to have the better witness about Christ and the more sure witness about Jesus, and that becomes a light in a dark day.

Imagine somewhere really dark, like down in a deep cavern or in a big huge forest where the trees block even the light from the moon and the stars. Someone might have a small light but it all seems so big. A person might stumble and fall in the darkness if the batteries went dead. People are stumbling and falling in the world today because they do not have the light from God. That is why people need to study Old Testament history.

Bible history divides itself biblically into several categories. First there is a **Prologue**: Genesis 1:1–11:9. It is revealed that there is a divine redeeming purpose. Then there is **Act One**: Genesis 11:10 — Malachi 4:6, which shows the unfolding of divine redemption as God called from Abraham a divine family. He made that family into the divine nation, and that nation became a divine remnant when they came out of captivity. Then there is **Act Two**: the New Testament from Matthew — Jude is the unfolding of divine redemption. The introduction of redemption is in the Gospels looking at Christ and the progression of redemption in the Book of Acts. Then finally, there is the **Epilogue**: Revelation gives a consummation of divine redemption. There is a vision of grace — Christ is LORD of the church. There is a vision of government — Christ is LORD of the earth. There is a vision of glory — Christ is LORD of eternity. History is His story. It is the story of Christ as is seen in every chapter of the study of Old Testament history.

From the Creation to the Fall

Genesis 1:1–3:24

Creation of the Cosmos

This second chapter of the history of the Hebrew family covers the part of the Prologue found in Genesis 1–3. This is the story of creation, but it is more than that. It is also the story of the fall of man in Genesis 1–2:3, which is the creation of the cosmos. This is the beginning of all things, and the place to start any discussion is always at the beginning:

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. And God said, [This would be said again and again because creation was by God's spoken word. It was creation by fiat, by command.] "Let there be light," and there was light. God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. God called the light "day," and the darkness he called "night." And there was evening, and there was morning—the first day (Genesis 1:1–5).

There was day and night, morning and evening. However, the Hebrew day started at six o'clock in the afternoon and ended the next day at six o'clock in the afternoon. This was a Hebrew day. This was not God's day because that could be a

thousand years. This was the Hebrew day that lasted twenty-four hours. There was evening, twelve hours, and there was morning, twelve hours, on the first day. These were twenty-four hour days.

Genesis 1:6–2:4 says:

And God said, “Let there be an expanse between the waters to separate water from water.” So God made the expanse and separated the water under the expanse from the water above it. And it was so. God called the expanse “sky.” And there was evening, and there was morning — the second day. And God said, “Let the water under the sky be gathered to one place, and let dry ground appear.” And it was so. God called the dry ground “land,” and the gathered waters he called “seas.” And God saw that it was good. Then God said, “Let the land produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants and trees on the land that bear fruit with seed in it, [notice the fruit was created with the seed already in it] according to their various kinds.” And it was so. The land produced vegetation: plants bearing seed according to their kinds and trees bearing fruit with seed in it according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening, and there was morning — the third day. And God said, “Let there be lights in the expanse of the sky to separate the day from the night, and let them serve as signs to mark seasons and days and years, and let them be lights in the expanse of the sky to give light on the earth.” And it was so. God made two great lights — the greater light to govern the day and the lesser light to govern the night. He also made the stars [notice that there was already light, but now He was making light bearers]. God set them in the expanse of the sky to give light on the earth, to govern

the day and the night, and to separate light from darkness. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the fourth day. And God said, “Let the water teem with living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the expanse of the sky.” So God created the great creatures of the sea and every living and moving thing with which the water teems, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. God blessed them and said, “Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the water in the seas, and let the birds increase on the earth.” And there was evening, and there was morning—the fifth day. And God said, “Let the land produce living creatures according to their kinds: livestock, creatures that move along the ground, and wild animals, each according to its kind.” And it was so. God made the wild animals according to their kinds, the livestock according to their kinds, and all the creatures that move along the ground according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good [notice that they were made after their own kind, not evolved into their kind]. Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.” So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. God blessed them [that is, the male and the female] and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground.” Then God said, “I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every

tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food. And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds of the air and all the creatures that move on the ground— everything that has the breath of life in it—I give every green plant for food.” And it was so. God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the sixth day. Thus the heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array. By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. And God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done. This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created ... (Genesis 1:6–2:4).

Creation Refutes Six Erroneous Doctrines

That is a long reading, but it is very comprehensive. Everything that now exists on earth existed on earth the first day. This section of Scripture refutes every attempt of man to explain how things got here. Creation says that matter is not eternal, so it refutes the idea of the **eternity of matter**. What is here has not always been here. God is the only one who has always been here. In the beginning God created. There was a beginning, but before there was a beginning there was a God. Creation also refutes the idea of **polytheism** because it says God created, not gods.

Creation refutes the idea of **agnosticism**, which says that there was no plan. Agnosticism says that this is just a senseless globe spinning around with senseless people upon it. However, because this creation was planned, it was not without cause.

Creation refutes **fatalism**, which says that things happen just because they happen. It was just fate. But this is not true, either, because the Bible reveals God’s will, purpose and progression expressed in creation.

Creation refutes **pantheism**, which says that all things are a god and that God is all things. Actually, God existed before anything else existed.

Creation also refutes **evolution**, because in six days God created all things. Notice the order of creation. God created the heavens and the earth, and then He created the things that live in the heavens and on the earth. On the first three days He created the things that would be occupied by the things created on the second three days.

The Advent of Mankind

In Genesis 2:4–25, the creation of man occurred sometime during the sixth day. This is a long reading, but a lot of the study in future chapters is going to come out of this foundation. This was a beginning, and it is important to begin well if there is going to be a well-traveled journey. Genesis 2:4–7 records the production of man:

This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created. When the LORD God made the earth and the heavens—and no shrub of the field had yet appeared on the earth and no plant of the field had yet sprung up, for the LORD God had not sent rain on the earth and there was no man to work the ground, but streams came up from the earth and watered the whole surface of the ground—the LORD God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.

Try to imagine this: God reached down and formed man. Man was breathing and standing before God, naked in all of his innocence and tall in all of his glory. He was the very image of God standing there, the one who was going to control and

subdue all that God had created. He was the intimate friend of God. Genesis 2:8–15 says man was put into God’s creation:

Now the LORD God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed. And the LORD God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground — trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food. In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. A river watering the garden flowed from Eden; from there it was separated into four headwaters. The name of the first is the Pishon; it winds through the entire land of Havilah, where there is gold. (The gold of that land is good; aromatic resin and onyx are also there.) The name of the second river is the Gihon; it winds through the entire land of Cush. [That was Ethiopia.] The name of the third river is the Tigris; it runs along the east side of Asshur. And the fourth river is the Euphrates. The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.

This was God’s **Provision for Man**. He gave man the work to do. But there was also a **Probation on Man**. With work comes the responsibility of doing the work. Genesis 2:16–17 says:

And the LORD God commanded the man, “You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die.”

In the probation, he was allowed the maximum and forbidden only the minimum.

In Genesis 2:18–20, notice the **Progression of Man** as he progressed to be reproductive:

The LORD God said, “It is not good [this is the only time that God looked at the creation and said that it was not good] for the man to be alone. [He did not say that man wasn’t good; He just said it wasn’t good for man to be alone.] I will make a helper suitable for him.” Now the LORD God had formed out of the ground all the beasts of the field and all the birds of the air. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. [Adam was intelligent.] So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds of the air and all the beasts of the field. But for Adam no suitable helper was found.

Why did God do this? He did it to teach man that there is nothing in the lower creation that meets the need of his heart. They are good and lovely creatures, but they are to be subdued by man. They are not partners with man. Man is to take none of them as his helper. Yes, these creatures can be his slaves, servants and co-workers but not the helper that would be suited for him. So man now knew that nothing in all of God’s creation met the unanswered ache of his heart. So God must meet that need. This He did in Genesis 2:21–23:

So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man’s ribs and closed up the place with flesh. Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man. [Why did He do that? The man knew why He did that.] The man said, “This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called ‘woman,’ [which means “from man”] for she was taken out of man.”

This was the only time that anything came from the “womb” of man. Woman is from the womb of man. She came from the inside of man. He did not take her from his head so she would rule over him or he over her. He did not take her from his feet so that he would stomp on her and be her lord. But He took her from his side where she would always walk and be that co-helper, that help meet, that helper who was suited for him: *“For this reason [because this is bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh] a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh”* (Genesis 2:24).

The King James Version says, *“Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh”* (Genesis 2:24, KJV). That is, they will be united in their heart and soul. There is a mystery in this just as Paul said in Ephesians 5:31–33:

“For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.” This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church. However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.

But there is also joy in it *“The man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame”* (Genesis 2:25). They were innocent and innocence feels no shame. Have you ever seen a little bitty boy or girl get out of the bath tub and run through the house without any clothes on at all? They would run outside, and if the Lord Christ was there they would run and jump in his lap and kiss Him. They have absolutely no shame because they are totally innocent. I wish that I was that way. I wish I did not know what I know about sin. God did not want Adam and Eve to know about sin either. Genesis 2:8–9, 15–17 says:

Now the LORD God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed. And the LORD God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground — trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food. In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil ... And the LORD God commanded the man, “You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die.”

Until they ate of that tree, they were innocent. They knew it was wrong not to keep the garden, and they knew it was wrong to eat of that tree. Man was given a four fold assignment: dominion over the universe, the multiplication of species, subjugation of the creation, and the cultivation of the earth. He was lord, not LORD of heaven and earth, but lord of the earth. He is to keep it for God.

The Temptation and the Fall

In Genesis 3 Satan came into the garden in the form of a serpent and approached the woman. Why did he approach the woman? He approached her because her emotions were more susceptible to his temptation, and she held the key to getting to the man, Adam. He said to the woman, “God said you cannot eat of any tree of the garden.” She said, “Oh no, you are wrong. We can eat of any tree we want to. The only tree we cannot eat of is this one.” “Why does not God want you to eat that one? God knows that when you eat of that tree, you are going to be like Him, and He is jealous of what He knows. He does not want you to eat of that tree because He does not want you to be like Him.” This was not so, but Eve believed it. She looked at the tree. This did not mean that she had not glanced at it before. But this time she looked at it closely. She stared at it. She

contemplated the tree. She saw that it was good for food, that it was a delight to the eyes. It was beautiful and desirable to make one wise. This was the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life. She took the fruit of the tree and ate it. She gave it to the man, who was with her. Adam was standing there through this whole thing. She gave to the man, and he took the fruit of the tree and ate it. Now both of their eyes were opened, and they saw that they were naked. They had been naked for a while, but they were innocent up until now. Now that they knew good and evil, they saw evil, and they saw their nakedness. They saw the evil of nakedness. So they took fig leaves and tried to cover themselves. They could not do an adequate job of covering themselves because sinful man cannot do an adequate job of anything.

God came into the garden in the cool of the evening as was His custom, and He said, “Adam, where are you?” He was not asking for information. Proverbs 15:3 says, “*The eyes of the LORD are everywhere, keeping watch on the wicked and the good.*” He knew where Adam was. He wanted Adam to know where he was. If Adam had been honest he would have said, “In sin,” because that was really where he was. God got the three of them in front of Him and began with Adam, and God said:

... “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?” The man said, “The woman you put here with me — she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it.” Then the LORD God said to the woman, “What is this you have done?” The woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate” (Genesis 3:11–13).

Adam sounded like he was blaming the woman, but I really think he was blaming God. And though it sounds like the

woman was blaming the serpent, I think she was also blaming God.

Then God did not even give Satan an opportunity to answer:

So the LORD God said serpent, “Because you have done this, “Cursed are you above all the livestock and all the wild animals! You will crawl on your belly and you will eat dust all the days of your life. And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel” (Genesis 3:14–15).

He told Satan that from then on he would be cursed and would struggle with good people.

Then God spoke to the woman and the man:

... “I will greatly increase your pains in childbearing; with pain you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you. To Adam he said, Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, ‘You must not eat of it,’ “Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return” (Genesis 3:16–19).

God then made them clothes out of the skins of animals to cover their nakedness, cast them from the garden, and put cherubim at the gate with blazing swords in their hands to keep them from coming back into the garden lest they eat of the tree

of life and live forever. That was judgment; but it was more than judgment, it was also mercy.

There is a good lesson to learn looking at the devil's tricks with the woman. He introduced doubt into her mind with the statement that God did not want her to know. He ignored the covenant, or he tried to get her to ignore the covenant that she and Adam had made with God. He denied that there was any connection between sin and punishment, because he said that in the day that they ate from that tree, they would not die. He challenged the divine statement, saying, "God knows better than to tell you that you are going to die." He charged God with jealousy, saying that God did not want man to acquire the knowledge that only He had. He appealed to the pride and the ambition of the woman to be knowledgeable as God is knowledgeable.

Satan is still using those wily ways on people today as he tries to get them to believe that God is not interested in satisfying their human fleshly needs and desires. He convinces them that they need the things that are beautiful and attractive to them and that they need to have the intelligence to rule other people and to rule the world as only God should rule the world. The woman's downfall was simply that she let herself be tricked into an unguarded conversation and that she never talked to God. Whenever Christians are tempted, they should talk to God, listen to Him in His Word, and talk to Him in prayer to keep from falling.

When Eve fell there was a twofold consequence:

- She had the pain of childbearing.
- She would from then on be in submission to man.

When Adam fell there was a fourfold result:

- There was the loss of innocence. They knew that they were naked.
- There was shame. They attempted to cover the result of their sin.
- There was fear as they hid from God when they used to walk and talk with Him.

- There was death. There was separation from the tree of life and spiritual death.

The LORD God was manifested twice in Genesis 3. He was manifested in judgment as He came and sought the guilty pair. He was manifested in judgment as He spoke to the guilty pair and made them admit to the sin they were involved in, and He was manifested in judgment when He sentenced all who were involved. He sentenced the serpent to be crushed, the woman to suffer, and the man to sweat and work all of his life in toil.

God was also manifested in grace. Redemption is really the key in Genesis 3, and the rest of the Bible tells the story that Genesis 3 introduces. Redemption was promised here, in that there were two seed lines promised: the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman. Victory was promised to the seed of the woman. Redemption was apprehended here because Adam named his wife Eve, which means “the mother of all living.” He knew that from her would come the One who was to win the battle. Redemption was typified as God had to kill animals to make clothes from their skins. The killing of animals also foreshadowed the fact that one day the Lamb of God would die so that all men might be covered from their sin. Redemption was made possible by the death and life cycle. If Adam had not died, there would be no Christ. If all the other men had not lived and died and had children, then there would be no Christ. The struggle is between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent. People are the seed of the woman. We are interested in knowing how, where, and why we win in the battle for our souls.

The Mother Promise and Redemption

Genesis 3:15

In this chapter every Bible student needs to study and know one of the most important verses in all the Bible. It is called “**The Mother Promise**” by many scholars:

*“And I will put enmity
between you and the woman,
and between your offspring and hers;
he will crush your head,
and you will strike his heel”*

(Genesis 3:15, NIV).

*“And I will put enmity
between thee and the woman,
and between thy seed and her seed;
it shall bruise thy head,
and thou shalt bruise his heel”* (Genesis 3:15, KJV).

Everything the Bible discusses and everything Jesus became is found in this verse.

Remember in the last chapter how the devil approached the woman and “*deceived*” her. Paul told Timothy in 1 Timothy 2:14, “*And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner.*” Adam was not deceived, but rather he sinned knowing what he was

doing. The woman was deceived and she ate of the fruit. She then gave it to the man and he ate. God then came and cursed everybody involved: the serpent, the woman, and the man. In cursing the serpent, notice what the LORD said in Genesis 3:14–15:

*So the LORD God said to the serpent, “Because you have done this, Cursed are you above all the livestock and all the wild animals! You will crawl on your belly and you will eat dust all the days of your life. And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; **he** will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.”*

“He” in this verse is not a plural offspring, but a singular masculine one. This refers to Christ because He is the “seed” of the woman, which is the word used in the King James Version. Paul wrote in Galatians 3:16–19: “*The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. The Scripture does not say ‘and to seeds,’ meaning many people, but ‘and to your seed,’ meaning one person, who is Christ.*” Jesus is also the “seed” of the woman as described by John in Revelation 12:1–17. In Genesis 3:15 there is both a prediction and a promise. The prediction is of a conflict between Satan’s “seed” and the woman’s “seed.” The promise is victory for the woman’s “seed.”

Definition of Key Words and Terms

Remember first that Genesis 3:15 is God talking to the serpent beginning with Genesis 3:14: “*So the LORD God said to the serpent ...And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.*” Consider the definitions of some of the terms that are used in this verse.

What does “*enmity*” mean? It means ill will, hatred and strife. It implies warfare, ill will and hatred between the godly and the ungodly. Some of the older versions like the King James Version use the word “*seed*” instead of “*offspring*.” God said, “*I will put enmity ... between thy seed and her seed*”(KJV). “*Seed*” is the idea of posterity or a future generation, which is one male child, “*offspring*.”

Then God said, “...*he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.*” The King James Version uses the word “*bruise*” instead of “*crush*” — “*it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel*” (Genesis 3:15, KJV). The word “*bruise*” means to trample down, and implied in that word is the idea of lying in wait to trample someone down. This was not honest warfare. It was someone lying in wait in order to jump upon someone else in order to crush or trample them down. It says that the “*seed*” of the woman will crush the “*head*” of the serpent. The head is the superior position, signifying the object of power, control and authority(cf. Revelation 19:16; Colossians 1:18). That is the idea of rulership or authority.

Satan would “*bruise the heel*” of the “*seed*” of the woman, which is Jesus. The heel is a much lesser position. If a person’s head is crushed, he would be dead. If his heel is crushed, he would be crippled. Being crippled is better than being dead, so all that Satan was able to do to the seed of the woman was to temporarily cripple Him. All that Satan was able to do was kill the LORD, but the LORD was able rise from the grave. The only thing Satan can do to Christians is to physically kill us, but we also will come up from the grave. He can only bruise the inferior part of the seed of the woman, while his life will be taken from him.

The Nature of Redemption

The aim of this chapter is make the reader aware of three things:

- First, the viciousness of Satan and his intent to harm the “seed” of the woman.
- Second, the power that Christians possess — that we are helped by a greater power than the power of Satan.
- Third, that God’s purpose will be providentially carried out and will stop Satan’s progress toward his goal.

Satan was challenged to a warfare by God. God said, “I’m going to put a war, enmity, ill will, hatred, and strife between you and this woman, between your ‘seed’ and her ‘seed.’ He will bruise your head, and you will bruise His heel.” Satan knew that there was One Child from this woman whom he must beat. One day there would be a Child from this woman, and if Satan did not beat Him, then he would be lost eternally in this struggle.

The Historical Development of the Conflict Between Cain and Abel

Satan is not omniscient; he does not know everything, and so he did not know which child of this woman would be the One with whom he must deal. So he immediately began to attack the two children that Adam and Eve had, Cain and Abel. Abel was a righteous man and Cain a profane man. They both brought a sacrifice to God, sacrifices that they thought were acceptable. The attitude in which they brought their sacrifices caused one to be acceptable, while the other was not. Abel’s offering, according to Hebrews 11:4, was done by faith, while Cain’s was not. Evidently Cain’s sacrifice was done merely to keep the rules. His sacrifice was offered by legalism and not by faith. God honored Abel’s sacrifice but did not honor Cain’s. That made Cain angry and jealous. So Cain killed his brother Abel and buried him in the soil. Hell was laughing because Abel, the righteous son, had been killed, and Cain, the profane and wicked son, was the only one left alive. Hell laughed too

quickly, though, because God began to tell a story that He would tell throughout the rest of the Bible. I like to call that story “Saved By One,” because God would always raise up one person who would save that seed line so that the “seed” of the woman would come and “bruise” the head of the devil. Remember the story — Adam and Eve had another son, Seth. Seth was a righteous son and Cain was still a profane son.

Daughters of Men and Sons of God

For a long while, the godly line of Seth and the ungodly line of Cain were separate (cf. Genesis 4:16). However, in Genesis 6:1–8 the sons of God took for themselves wives from among the daughters of men. It is not known if that means intermarriage or intermarriage and polygamy. But they took for themselves wives of whomsoever they chose, and the thought of every man’s heart became only evil; and that evil was continual. So God said that He would destroy every living soul that breathed. It is interesting that when the godly indiscriminately marry the ungodly the ungodly win out. The dirty dominates over the clean. For example, outside of Geneva, Switzerland, there are two rivers that flow side by side. One of those rivers is clear, beautiful and lucid, while the other one is brown, muddy and turbid. Down the way they come together and form one river. For a while there is a clear demarcation between the clean water on one side and the muddy water on the other side. But before long the whole river is what? Clean and lucid? Not at all. The water is brown, muddy and turbid. Paul wrote, “*Do not be misled. ‘Bad company corrupts good character’*” (1 Corinthians 15:33).

There are only three things that someone can do with evil companions: become like them, convert them, or leave them alone. But in the case of the sons of God and the daughters of men, they did not leave them alone. There had

been an indiscriminate mixture of the good and the bad, so that the thought of every man's heart became evil continually. So God determined that He would destroy the world with a flood. But one man, Noah, found favor in the sight of God. This is well known. He built an ark and saved the world. One man saved the world from prevailing wickedness and saved the seed line until that One could come who would bruise the serpent's head. Noah's ark rested on Mount Ararat, on sinless ground. Noah walked off the ark and planted a vineyard. From the vineyard came the grape, from the grape came the wine, and from the wine came the drunk. That is always the order it follows, and the drunk at this time was Noah. Here was the righteous man, who chose unrighteousness again. The wickedness that was in the pre-flood world was now in the post-flood world.

Barren Womb and Abundant Promise

Ten generations went by and a man named Abram was born. God appeared to Abram at his homeland in Ur of the Chaldees, and later at Haran, north of Ur of the Chaldees. God told Abram that He would bless all the world through his seed. That seed was the One who was going to bruise the devil's head just as God had said would happen in Genesis 3:15. This was the woman's seed who was now the seed of Abram. Abram must have the child through whom the serpent's head would be bruised, or through whom the One would come that was to bruise the serpent's head. But Abram made a mistake. He married a barren woman. There was no way that Sarah, his wife, could have a child. They prayed, they struggled, they planned, but they had no children. Abraham was 99 years old, and Sarah was 89, and if she had ever had the ability to bear children, she had lost it (cf. Genesis 17:5,15,24). Had the devil won? There was laughter in hell. God had made a mistake. The man through whom the seed was to come was married to a barren woman,

and now it would take a double miracle: she had to be cured of her barrenness, and she had to be able to bear again. If she had ever had the ability to bear a son, she was too old to bear now. Whatever it would take for God to fulfill His purpose, that was what God would do. Sarah did have a child. They called his name Isaac, which means “laughter.” Hell’s laughter was over, and now heaven and earth were laughing because the seed line would continue. A barren womb cannot thwart or stop the purpose of God.

Famine and Family

Abraham’s family had become seventy-five souls by the time they moved into Egypt. Joseph was already in Egypt. Then a famine occurred around the entire world, and it would have killed the seed line except for the fact that Joseph, who was in Egypt, had become the Prime Minister of all of Egypt. The seed line was preserved there. Out of all of the tribes of Jacob, the tribe of Judah in Genesis 49:8–12 was chosen to be the seed line tribe as Jacob blessed his sons, telling them what would happen to them “*in days to come*”:

“Judah, your brothers will praise you; your hand will be on the neck of your enemies; your father’s sons will bow down to you. You are a lion’s cub, Judah; you return from the prey, my son. Like a lion he crouches and lies down, like a lioness — who dares to rouse him? The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet, until he comes to whom it belongs and the obedience of the nations is his. He will tether his donkey to a vine, his colt to the choicest branch; he will wash his garments in wine, his robes in the blood of grapes. His eyes will be darker than wine, his teeth whiter than milk.”

Then the seed line was doomed by Pharaoh's decree in Exodus 1:22, "... *'Every boy that is born you must throw into the Nile, but let every girl live.'*" However, that seed line was preserved by one who lived in Pharaoh's daughter's house, a man named Moses. Imagine Pharaoh coming in from a hard day of killing Hebrews and saying, "I'm tired. I've killed Hebrews all day long. Bring my grandson, Moses, and let me bounce him on my knee." Pharaoh was actually raising the very one who would not only destroy the nation of Egypt by means of the ten plagues, but would also save the seed line.

Evil Attempts to Kill David

Of all the families in Judah, the family of David was chosen to be the seed line family, and finally David became the king of the nation. Satan tried to kill him first through Goliath, then by Saul, and then by Absalom. But God preserved David's life so that the seed line would come through him. Then God promised him in 2 Samuel 7:12–13 that his line would be the line through whom the Messiah would be traced:

"When your days are over and you rest with your fathers, who will come from your own body, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, your own flesh and blood, and I will establish his kingdom. He is the one who will build a house for my Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever."

Because of that promise, David's seed line came to be called the "Royal Seed." Then the nations divided into Judah in the south and Israel in the north. David's line ruled in Judah, and nine ungodly kings ruled in Israel. One of those lines was the line of Omri, and the chief in Omri's nation was

Ahab. He married a wicked woman named Jezebel, and they had a wicked daughter named Athaliah. Then Jehoshaphat's son, Jehoram, married. Jehoshaphat was the King of Judah, a righteous king. The righteous king's son married Athaliah, the second most wicked woman who ever lived.

Devilish Woman and the Royal Seed

Athaliah brought the worship of the fertility god, Baal, into the very House of God in Jerusalem. Her son, Ahaziah, was killed on the field of battle by Jehu, the fast chariot driver. The text says in 2 Kings 11 that Queen Athaliah slew all the seed royal. This was a period when hell was still laughing and there was no bruising of the devil's head. She slew all the royal seed except one-year-old Joash, whom the king and queen's servant, Jehosheba, took and hid. Had Athaliah killed just one more child, had she just killed this little one-year-old baby, Satan would have won and Christ's head, therefore God's head, would have been bruised. God would have lost. But God cannot lose. Satan did everything except what he really had to do. He had to kill this boy, yet he could not because God preserved him. God's purpose cannot be thwarted by an evil woman's plot.

Death and Hezekiah

Over a period of time, Hezekiah became the king of Judah. Hezekiah was a righteous man, but he was going to die. In 2 Kings 20 he was sick, and God sent Isaiah, the prophet, to tell Hezekiah to set his house in order, for he was going to die. Hezekiah did what seems at first a rather strange thing. He turned his face to the wall and prayed to live. Why was he praying to live? Consider what Paul wrote to the church in Philippi:

If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labor for me. Yet what shall I choose? I do

not know! I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far; but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body (Philippians 1:22–24).

God told Hezekiah he could live. Isaiah went back to Hezekiah and told him that he would live fifteen more years. When he died, then it was revealed why God did all of this: there was no seed line. When Hezekiah died, Manasseh, his son, took the throne at the age of twelve. Hezekiah was not praying for himself; he was praying for the seed line. He was praying for the woman's seed to come and bruise the head of the serpent. God's purpose cannot be thwarted by illness.

Wicked Haman and the Jewish Remnant

Israel went into Assyrian captivity in 722 B.C., and Judah went into Babylonian captivity in 586 B.C. Finally the Persian empire took over Judah from the Babylonian empire, and there was a king of Persia called Xerxes in their language, who in the Bible, is called Ahasuerus. Ahasuerus fought against the Spartans and fought to a tie at Thermopylae. He came home, and he and his generals were depressed. They gave a great feast to overcome their depression. They all got drunk, and Ahasuerus called for his beautiful wife, Vashti, to come and dance before him, but she refused. So he banished her from the empire in a fit of drunken rage. When he sobered up, he missed Vashti, for he loved her. He had hundreds of wives and concubines, but he loved Vashti. After he went around the palace sad for a while, one of his counselors suggested having a beauty contest to find another woman whom the king could love. He had a counselor named Mordecai who had a niece or cousin named Esther, whom he entered into the contest. By the providence of God, this Hebrew maiden, Esther, became the queen of Persia.

Haman was a wicked man, and he was second-in-command in all of Persia. He had a chariot, and he rode through the streets of Susa saying, “Everybody bow before the king’s honored.” Everybody did except one stiff-backed Jew named Mordecai who would bow before no god but Jehovah and would bow before no man. Haman’s pride consumed him. He must have Mordecai slain! However, he could not just honestly kill him because Mordecai was an honored counselor of the king. So Haman conceived an evil plot. He went to the king and said that there were people in the land who did not honor the king, nor did they honor the gods. They honored another God. “They are numerous,” Haman said, “...and if our enemies come, they might ally against us, and we would be defeated. We have got to kill them.” The king agreed, and a law was passed that on a certain day all the Jews would die. It was sealed with the king’s ring and sent quickly through all the provinces of Persia. Every Jew in Persia was going to die on that day.

Mordecai learned of this decree and went to Esther, who was the queen. Mordecai told Esther that she must go and plead with her husband, or their people would die. She said, “If I go plead to my husband and he does not extend the scepter, he will kill me.” Mordecai told her, “Whether it be you or someone else, one will be raised up to save the people.” Mordecai did not need to be inspired to know that. He just needed to have studied history in order to know that every single time it looked like Satan was going to win, God did not raise up an army, He raised up one single person who would save the seed line.

Esther acknowledged that Mordecai was right. She agreed to go and talk to the king and if she died, then she died. She went to the king and said, “I want to give a feast tomorrow night for just you and Haman.” God put in her mind what to say. That night her husband, the king, could not sleep, so he called for some of the nation’s history to be

read to him. As they were reading along, they read that there had been a plot to kill the king, yet Mordecai had uncovered the plot and had the men who were plotting to kill the king executed. The king still could not sleep. He asked if anything had been done to honor Mordecai, and the answer was no. Mordecai did not need honor; he served the king.

At that very moment Haman walked into the antechamber. The king asked Haman what should be done for a person who had served the king with honor. What should be done? Haman believed that he was the one the king was talking about, so he said: “I would put the king’s robe on his back, then put him on the king’s horse and let the second best man in all the empire lead him through the streets, saying, ‘Everybody bow before the king’s honored.’” The king said: “That is a good idea; as a matter of fact, since you thought of it, you can lead the horse. You put the robe on Mordecai’s back, put Mordecai on my horse and lead him through the streets, telling everybody to bow down before the king’s honored.” Haman did it, but he did not like it. At the end of the day, he built a gallows seventy-five feet tall because he wanted everybody to see Mordecai hung. That night, Esther gave the feast and unfolded Haman’s plot. Ahasuerus, who could remember Haman’s dour face, was told about the gallows. He had Haman hung on his own gallows. He went on to tell Esther that the Jews would still be killed on that day. However, the Jews would be forewarned about the attack and would be allowed to protect themselves. Every year since then the Jews have observed a feast called the Feast of Purim that honored the salvation of the nation by Esther. What it really honored was the seed line. It was preserved by this one woman so that the Christ could come. And on and on the story goes.

Christ Was Born and Herod Slaughtered the Infants; Satan and Jesus

Finally, a woman was pregnant, having never known a man. A virgin was going to have a child. Satan knew this was the One, this was the One whom he must kill. He tried to kill Him in Bethlehem, and Joseph carried Him to Egypt. He tried to get Him to sin in the wilderness, and God preserved Him as He quoted the Word of God. Over and over again the devil tempted Him, and finally he made His back look like hamburger meat with a whip, made His head a pin cushion with the thorns, made the blood and spittle equally mixed flow down His face and hung Him on a cross between heaven and earth as if He were not fit for either one of them. God finally forsook Him; the sky blackened, and Satan had his day. Death and Satan tried their best, or their worst, to get Jesus to sin from that tree, yet all He said was, “Father, forgive them. It is finished. Into your hands I commend my spirit.” He bowed his head on His chest, and hell quit laughing because:

Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death — that is, the devil — and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death (Hebrews 2:14–15).

By dying, Jesus conquered death and took away the power of Satan. He bruised Satan’s head, but the fight goes on. In Romans 16:19–20 God said:

Everyone has heard about your obedience, so I am full of joy over you; but I want you to be wise about what is good, and innocent about what is evil. The

*God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet.
The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you.*

Christians through their godly lives and godly deaths, are also bruising the serpent's head. The aftermath of all of this will be discussed in the next chapter. It is important to talk about the consequences of this. So many times we think too little of the devil's power, and as we come into temptation, we do not even know that he is there, and he defeats us. But equally dangerous is to think too much of the devil's power. The apostle John said: "*You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world*" (1 John 4:4). Christians have victory over Satan. Jesus has victory over Satan more fully. The Church also has victory over Satan more fully:

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 8:37–39).

Do not ignore the devil:

Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings (1 Peter 5:8–9).

Christians can defeat the devil, and the victory that overcomes the world is our faith (cf. 1 John 5:4). The One who overcomes the devil is Jesus. With Jesus, we will meet the devil in hand-to-hand combat day by day. His head will be bruised again and again and again as faithful men and women die and go to sing redemption's song in heaven's sweet city.

The Aftermath of Conflict

Genesis 4:1–8:14

Review

The “Mother Promise,” which was the prophecy of all prophecies, is found in Genesis 3:15. God spoke to the serpent, who was actually the devil personified. God said to him:

“And I will put enmity [warfare, ill will] between you and the woman [Eve], and between your offspring [“seed”] and hers [her “seed”] ...he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel”
(Genesis 3:15).

The “seed” of the woman might be thought of as plural, and rightly so, but it is basically singular because it says “he,” her “seed,” was going to be one man. Jesus in His death and resurrection took away the devil’s power, but in that He Himself was hurt temporarily.

The “Mother Promise” is the primary story of the Old Testament: the devil tried to destroy the woman’s seed, and God always raised up one individual to keep that from happening. Cain killed Abel, and God raised up Seth. The whole world became wicked, and God raised up Noah. The whole world became idolatrous, and God raised up Abraham. The nation of Israel went away into Egypt, and God raised up Moses. God chose Judah as the tribe through

whom He would bless the world and then raised up David's family. Goliath tried to destroy David's family; Saul tried to destroy it; Absalom tried to destroy it; Athaliah tried to destroy it; yet God triumphed in every case. In captivity, Haman, the wicked second-in-command in the Persian empire, tried to destroy Israel, but God raised up Esther to preserve the seed. During the period of four hundred years of biblical silence, the Seleucid empire tried to destroy the seed, and God raised up a man named Judas Maccabee, also known as "The Hammer," to save Israel. The Feast of Dedication today in Israel honors the struggles of Judas Maccabee. Finally the virgin had a child without any logical explanation. No man's seed was in her, yet Jesus was born. He fought the devil even when He was an infant. Satan tried to destroy Jesus. So Joseph, his father, carried Him away to Egypt. Satan met Him in the wilderness of temptation, and three times Jesus drove the devil away with the spoken and quoted Word. For three and a half years, the devil tried through Jewish hypocrisy and Roman brutality to destroy and overcome Jesus. Jesus conquered them all on the cross and proved it by being raised from the dead. Paul told the church at Rome in Romans 16:19–20:

Everyone has heard about your obedience, so I am full of joy over you; but I want you to be wise about what is good, and innocent about what is evil. The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you.

"Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints" (Psalm 116:15) — For with Jesus' death, as with every saint's death, Satan's head is bruised again and again.

The Savior's Power Is Seen in His Claims

There is one other point that must be made on the discussion of Genesis 3:15, and that is the aftermath of the conflict between Jesus and Satan. The Savior's power is seen in some claims that He made. In Luke 11 Jesus claimed to be more powerful than the devil and because of that to be able to defeat him. In Luke 11:14 Jesus drove out a demon that was mute. When the demon left, the man who had been dumb spoke, and the crowd was amazed.

But some of them said, “By Beelzebub, the prince of demons, he is driving out demons.” Others tested him by asking for a sign from heaven. Jesus knew their thoughts and said to them: “Any kingdom divided against itself will be ruined, and a house divided against itself will fall. If Satan is divided against himself, how can his kingdom stand? I say this because you claim that I drive out demons by Beelzebub. Now if I drive out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your followers drive them out? So then, they will be your judges. But if I drive out demons by the finger of God [Matthew says “the spirit of God”], then the kingdom of God has come to you. When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own house, his possessions are safe. But when someone stronger attacks and overpowers him, he takes away the armor in which the man trusted and divides up the spoils. He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me, scatters” (Luke 11:15–23).

Jesus said, “The aftermath of this struggle that I am having with the devil today is that I am going to bruise his head and prove that I am stronger than he. I am able to spoil his goods. I am able to completely plunder his house. I can

enter into his house and completely and absolutely destroy his things. I can bind him and tie him up to prove that he has absolutely no power over me or anyone who is connected with Me.” That was the aftermath of this struggle. If Jesus bruised the devil’s head, then the devil had absolutely no power over Jesus or anybody who belongs to Jesus. And, of course, He bruised the devil’s power not only by dying on the cross but also by being raised from the dead. In John 14:30 Jesus said: “*...for the prince of this world is coming. He has no hold on me.*” The devil had absolutely no power over Jesus. Jesus’ sinless life negated the devil’s plot. Jesus said in John 10:17–18:

“The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life — only to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father.”

So the cross was God’s plan, not merely the devil’s plot. It was the devil’s plot, but God used the devil’s plot to defeat him on his own battlefield — the battlefield of death and the battlefield of sin. He went into the strong man’s house. That strong man was fully armed and guarded his own courts, yet Jesus went into his home base. He went in with the devil having all the home field advantage, and He defeated him by living a sinless life and being raised from the dead. He totally defeated Satan. Hebrews 2:14–15 says:

Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy [bring to naught, to nothing, to zero] him who holds the power of death — that is, the devil — and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.

In Revelation 1:9–19 the picture of Jesus is magnificent. He held seven stars in His right hand, which is just a fabulous picture. John, seeing all of what Jesus was in this heavenly vision, fell on his face before God. But Jesus put His right hand on him and said: “... ‘*Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades*’” (Revelation 1:17–18). That is what made Jesus unique — not simply His life, not simply the fabulous teaching He did in the sermon on the mountain and in the parables, or the remarkable love that He had for the poor and the downtrodden. The thing that made Jesus unique is that He is the only One who can say, “‘*I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades.*’” The devil’s head has been bruised. The serpent has been crushed and destroyed. Jesus holds all power over the dominion that Satan once held.

The Savior’s Power Is Seen in His Cross

Jesus’ power was portrayed by the resurrection, but it was also seen in the cross. It is because of Jesus and Him crucified that Christians have victory over the devil, “*For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God*” (1 Corinthians 1:18). When Jesus was raised from the dead, it confirmed all that He had done on the cross. It burst open the gates of the grave. Death could not possibly hold Him. He had wrestled the devil’s power from him, and now He is the conqueror and victor of death.

The Doctrinal Significance of the Conflict

So what? That is the question to ask right now. Jesus overcame. Jesus won. What does that mean to men today? What is the doctrinal significance of all of this? This

question will come up again and again in the study of Old Testament history. But here at the beginning, notice a threefold doctrinal significance to this conflict. What does it mean to Christians on a personal level? What power does it bring to our live? It brings three things to our lives.

The Promise of God Can Be Relied On

Number one, the promise of God can be relied on. In the garden of Eden, at the dawn of history, God said that the serpent's head would be crushed by the seed of the woman. And in spite of all the combined efforts of earth and hell to prevent it, the promise of God was fulfilled. Christians can rely on the fact that if God promises something, then it is going to come to pass.

The Providence of God Will Protect His People

Number two, the providence of God will protect His people. Not only can Christians rely on His promise, we can also rely on His providential working, His providential hand. He will protect us. He says, "I will never leave you. I will never forsake you. Not in any sense of the word will I forsake you." Hebrews 13:5–6 says:

Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you." So we say with confidence, "The LORD is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?"

God promised in Eden's garden that step by step, day by day, year by year, in every way He works that promise providentially in the lives of His people.

The Purpose of God Will Always Stand

Number three, the purpose of God will always stand. If God purposed a thing, it is eternal. That is what is called the eternal purpose of God. This conflict with Satan goes on continually. Christians need to continue to be faithful to Jesus so we can bruise Satan's head too. We can rely on God's promise that it will occur. We can rely on God's providence in our lives, and we can rely on God to work out His purpose in our individual lives.

From the Fall to the Flood**The Historical Account of Cain and Abel**

Go back to Genesis 4 and continue the story from the fall to the flood. Genesis 4:1–8:14 covers the time from Adam and Eve's sin to Noah and the flood. To begin with, there was the historical incident of Cain and Abel. Genesis 4 is a very interesting chapter due to the fact that immediately the devil began his conflict with the woman's seed. Adam and Eve had two children mentioned, Cain and Abel. They both brought an offering to God. Cain brought his offering from the fruit of the field because he was a farmer, and Abel brought his from the flock because he was a shepherd. When God ordered sacrifices in the Law of Moses, He honored both the sacrifice of the field and the sacrifice of the flock. The problem here was not with what they were bringing. They were both bringing what they needed to bring, the fruit of their hands and the fruit of their labor unto God, but God accepted Abel's offering and did not accept Cain's (cf. Genesis 4:4–7). How God accepted the sacrifice, the text does not say. So Cain's sacrifice was not accepted by God, but Abel's was. The writer of Hebrews said: "*By faith Abel offered a better sacrifice than Cain did ...*" (Hebrews 11:4). Not by kind, not by quantity, not even

by quality, but by the faith that he had in God was his offering accepted.

God's Divine Judgment on Cain

Immediately sin entered the picture through Cain, who was a profane man. Profane means worldly, which does not mean that he was necessarily an evildoer, although he was; it just means that he was a worldly man. He was worldly in the fact that he was jealous that Abel's sacrifice was accepted and his was not, so he murdered his brother and then buried him beneath the soil. The first step after sin is to try to hide it. It was true with his father and mother, and it was true with Cain. He tried to hide the fact that he had slaughtered Abel. God came in judgment and spoke to Cain: "... *'Where is your brother Abel?'* ..." (Genesis 4:9). Did God know where Abel was? Of course, He knew. But He asked the question in order to make Cain reply and consider the wickedness he had done. Cain replied in question form, as many people would: "... *'Am I my brother's keeper?'*" (Genesis 4:9). Cain said, "Why are you asking me about him? I don't know where my brother is." God said: "... *'What have you done? Listen! Your brother's blood cries out to me from the ground'*" (Genesis 4:10). The writer of Hebrews used that statement when he said:

... You have come to God, the judge of all men, to the spirits of righteous men made perfect, to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel (Hebrews 12:23–24).

Here was innocent Abel's blood, at least innocent in this case, crying out for vindication. Jesus' innocent blood vindicates Christians. One cried for vindication, the other was a vindicating cry. Jesus' cry spoke better than that of

Abel. Nevertheless, Cain stood here to be judged because he had murdered his brother, Abel.

Notice God's divine judgment on Cain in Genesis 4:10–12:

The LORD said, “What have you done? Listen! Your brother's blood cries out to me from the ground. Now you are under a curse and driven from the ground, which opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. When you work the ground, it will no longer yield its crops for you. You will be a restless wanderer on the earth.”

That was Cain's curse. He could not find a place where he could raise a good crop, and he became a nomad, a wanderer all of his life. Hear Cain's cry to the LORD in Genesis 4:13–14:

Cain said to the LORD, “My punishment is more than I can bear. Today you are driving me from the land, and I will be hidden from your presence; I will be a restless wanderer on the earth, and whoever finds me will kill me.”

In response to Cain's objection, the LORD said if someone killed him it would put him out of his misery, yet that was not what God wanted:

But the LORD said to him, “Not so; if anyone kills Cain, he will suffer vengeance seven times over.” Then the LORD put a mark on Cain so that no one who found him would kill him. So Cain went out from the LORD's presence and lived in the land of Nod, east of Eden (Genesis 4:15–16).

The Genealogies of Cain and Seth

Cain's family line began in Genesis 4:17–24. He was the father of a nation that might be called more modern than Seth's line, who replaced Abel. As a matter of fact, Genesis 4:17 says, “...*Cain was then building a city, and he named it after his son Enoch.*”

They built great metropolitan cities of that day. They were polygamists. They became sexually immoral as did many cities during that time. They played instruments of music and were workers of fine things, so they were given to culture. They even became workers of iron, which gave the world the first industrial push. So Cain and his seed were profane. They were worldly people; some were ungodly, just as some people are in the twenty-first century (cf. Genesis 4:18–24).

Genesis 4:25–26 says:

Adam lay with his wife again, and she gave birth to a son and named him Seth, saying, “God has granted me another child in place of Abel, since Cain killed him.” Seth also had a son, and he named him Enosh. At that time men began to call on the name of the LORD.

Seth had Abel's spiritual mind. He was a shepherd, doing his work out in the open, and he was close to God. The family tree of Seth is recorded in Genesis 5, listing ten generations from Adam to Noah. These generations were godly on the whole. There were people like Enoch who went to be with God because he walked with God. Also listed is Methuselah, who lived 969 years (cf. Genesis 5:27). That is all that is known about him. Taking a careful chronological look at Genesis 5, it seems that Methuselah died the same year of the flood. This is not stated, but if one considers his age at the time of Noah's birth, it is seen that Methuselah died the

year of the flood. Perhaps he died in the flood. The world became very wicked during those ten generations.

Great Apostasy and the Following Judgment

Beginning in Genesis 6:1 the story of the apostasy and the following judgment is recorded. When men began to increase in number on the earth and daughters were born to them, the sons of God, who were the godly line of Seth, saw that the daughters of men, that was the ungodly line of Cain, were beautiful and married any of them they chose: “*Then the LORD said, ‘My Spirit will not contend with man forever, for he is mortal; his days will be a hundred and twenty years’*” (Genesis 6:3). God was not talking about how long a man would live because they continued to live longer than that. He was talking about how long it would be from that moment until He destroyed the entire world with a flood. Righteous Noah had 120 years to preach to the ungodly before God destroyed them. Notice the “seeds” were blended when the godly line married the ungodly, and that created an evil generation. God’s divine warning was, “... *‘My Spirit will not contend with man forever...’*”

Notice what Genesis 6:4 says:

The Nephilim [which literally means “the giants”] were on the earth in those days—and also afterward—when the sons of God went to the daughters of men and had children by them. They were the heroes of old, men of renown.

Now notice the divine judgment in Genesis 6:5–8:

*The LORD saw how great man’s wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was **only** evil **all** the time. The LORD was grieved that he had made man on the*

earth, and his heart was filled with pain. So the LORD said, “I will wipe mankind, whom I have created, from the face of the earth — men and animals, and creatures that move along the ground, and birds of the air — for I am grieved that I have made them.” But Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD.

So there was the divine response — God totally destroyed the entire world! There was a godly remnant: “...Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD.... Noah was a righteous man, blameless among the people of his time, and he walked with God” (Genesis 6:8–9). That is a good description of a godly man. He was “righteous,” which means that he followed the law. He was “blameless,” which means he strove to be righteous. “He walked with God,” which showed his humility.

Noah had three sons: Shem, Ham and Japheth. In Genesis 6:11–13, God said:

Now the earth was corrupt in God’s sight and was full of violence. God saw how corrupt the earth had become, for all the people on earth had corrupted their ways. So God said to Noah, “I am going to put an end to all people, for the earth is filled with violence because of them. I am surely going to destroy both them and the earth.”

In Genesis 6 God talked to Noah about building the ark, giving him all the necessary details. He told Noah about the doors and rooms and that the ark was to be 450 feet long, 75 feet wide and 45 feet high. Genesis 7:5–16 says:

And Noah did all that the LORD commanded him. Noah was six hundred years old when the

floodwaters came on the earth. And Noah and his sons and his wife and his sons' wives entered the ark to escape the waters of the flood....the floodwaters came on the earth.... all the springs of the great deep burst forth, and the floodgates of the heavens were opened. And rain fell on the earth forty days and forty nights.... Pairs of all creatures that have the breath of life in them came to Noah and entered the ark. The animals going in were male and female of every living thing, as God had commanded Noah. Then the LORD shut him in.

Notice that the fountains of water underneath the earth erupted, which is where most of the water came from. The world was not flooded by rain as much as it was by the eruption of all this water that was under the earth. The whole earth was covered with water deep enough to float the ark. For a full year they were on that ark; and then, finally, at the end of that year, they began to send out the birds to find out how things were. The birds always came back. Finally, they sent out a bird that did not return, and then they knew that the flood was over.

The ark rested on the mountains of Ararat, and finally the LORD opened the door. Noah and his family could go out and stand on sinless ground. What a beautiful possibility to think of starting life all over again, of starting to live in a sinless condition, ready to start afresh? The problem with that is wherever people are, sin is there; men are sinners. There were eight godly people on the ark, who were still sinners as they walked off the ark. Noah later planted a vineyard, and from the vineyard came the grape, and from the grape came the wine, and from the wine came the drunk. Sin started all over again, and the struggle with the devil continued. From the flood, learn that a new start is simply a start to walk with God again, not a walk of sinlessness.

From the Flood to Babel and the Old Testament World's Geography

Genesis 8:15–11:9

Review and Introduction

Studying all of Noah’s life was done on purpose to be able to see his life up until the time of the flood. The flood came, and after the flood Noah and his family were ready to disembark from the ark. The Bible says that the ark came to rest on the mountains of Ararat (plural), which would indicate the mountain range of Ararat, not necessarily the main mountain. The ark rested on the earth and Noah began to live again upon the earth. Genesis 8:15–19 says:

Then God said to Noah, “Come out of the ark, you and your wife and your sons and their wives. Bring out every kind of living creature that is with you—the birds, the animals, and all the creatures that move along the ground—so they can multiply on the earth and be fruitful and increase in number upon it.” So Noah came out, together with his sons and his wife and his sons’ wives. All the animals and all the creatures that move along the ground and all the birds—everything that moves on the earth—came out of the ark, one kind after another.

Noah and His Family

There was a magnificent emergence as Noah, the righteous seed, and all of the innocent animals of the world came out of the ark to repopulate the world. There are some people who believe that this was only a local flood. But if that were true then there would have been no reason for the ark. Noah and the others could have just gone up to a mountain in another part of the world to wait for the flood to cease. This was a worldwide flood with the intent of destroying all the wicked so that there could be a brand new start.

Imagine Noah coming out of the ark, and watch his character and the first thing he did. That would indicate the character of a man. The first thing he did is recorded in Genesis 8:20–22:

Then Noah built an altar to the LORD and, taking some of all the clean animals and clean birds, he sacrificed burnt offerings on it. The LORD smelled the pleasing aroma and said in his heart: “Never again will I curse the ground because of man, even though every inclination of his heart is evil from childhood. And never again will I destroy all living creatures, as I have done. [There have been a lot of local floods, so this was not a local flood because God said, “I’ll never do this again.”] As long as the earth endures, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night will never cease.”

God was satisfied that man would remember this momentous judgment and that He would not have to do something like this again. That was God’s divine intention. He never intended to destroy the world by a flood again. In

Genesis 9:1 God announced a new era, a new eon of life:
"Then God blessed Noah and his sons, saying to them, 'Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the earth. '"

Until that time man had been friends with the animals and the animals friends with them, but Genesis 9:2–3 says:

"The fear and dread of you will fall upon all the beasts of the earth and all the birds of the air, upon every creature that moves along the ground, and upon all the fish of the sea; they are given into your hands. Everything that lives and moves will be food for you. Just as I gave you the green plants, I now give you everything."

Up until that time, man had been a vegetarian; he had only eaten the green things. Now God gave him the animals to eat also, but with a prohibition. God, when He grants the maximum, always forbids the minimum. Genesis 9:4–7 says:

"But you must not eat meat that has its lifeblood still in it. And for your lifeblood I will surely demand an accounting. I will demand an accounting from every animal. And from each man, too, I will demand an accounting for the life of his fellow man. Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God has God made man. As for you, be fruitful and increase in number; multiply on the earth and increase upon it."

Notice the era that started here. Man was now a flesh eater. Up until that time, man and all the animals had simply been eaters of vegetation. Now they also could eat the animal but not the blood because the life is in the blood. Notice also that in regard to mankind it is different. Man

could shed animal's blood and eat the meat, but whoever shed another man's blood, his blood would be shed. That started the law of capital punishment. Remember that capital punishment is of God, and it was an order from God as soon as the ark had rested on sinless soil. Now consider the covenant that was made in Genesis 9:8–11:

Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him: “I now establish my covenant with you and with your descendants after you and with every living creature that was with you — the birds, the livestock and all the wild animals, all those that came out of the ark with you — every living creature on earth. I establish my covenant with you: [Here it is] Never again will all life be cut off by the waters of a flood; never again will there be a flood to destroy the earth.”

Again that makes the flood universal and not just a local flood because there had been local floods before this time. God said this would never happen again. So God made a covenant, “I will be with you; I will never again destroy all living creatures.” Now watch the sign of the covenant in Genesis 9:12–17:

And God said, “This is the sign of the covenant I am making between me and you and every living creature with you, a covenant for all generations to come: I have set my rainbow in the clouds, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and the earth. Whenever I bring clouds over the earth and the rainbow appears in the clouds, I will remember my covenant between me and you and all living creatures of every kind. Never again will the waters become a flood to destroy all life. Whenever the

rainbow appears in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and all living creatures of every kind on the earth.” So God said to Noah, “This is the sign of the covenant I have established between me and all life on the earth.”

This passage simply says that God will never again bring the kind of flood He brought in Noah’s day. It was a worldwide flood. Noah and seven other human beings were all who escaped the judgment of the flood. Two of every kind of animal and seven of every clean kind of animal went with them on the ark. Peter makes reference to this in 1 Peter 3:21: *“and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also — not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God.”*

Every person today comes from Shem, Ham or Japheth. Genesis 9:17–19 says:

So God said to Noah, “This is the sign of the covenant I have established between me and all life on the earth.” The sons of Noah who came out of the ark were Shem, Ham and Japheth. (Ham was the father of Canaan.) These were the three sons of Noah, and from them came the people who were scattered over the earth.

The world was a brand new place, and the people were living in a sinless environment. But that did not last long. Genesis 9:20–23 tells the following story:

Noah, a man of the soil, proceeded to plant a vineyard. When he drank some of its wine, he became drunk and lay uncovered inside his tent. Ham, the father of Canaan, saw his father’s

nakedness and told his two brothers outside. But Shem and Japheth took a garment and laid it across their shoulders; then they walked in backward and covered their father's nakedness. Their faces were turned the other way so that they would not see their father's nakedness.

It seems like Ham was laughing at his father's drunken nakedness. Shem and Japheth honored their father even though he had done a dishonorable thing. Even though he was not worthy of honor at that moment, they honored him because he was their father.

Noah was a man of God who walked with God in righteousness although he was a sinner: “*When Noah awoke from his wine and found out what his youngest son had done to him he said, ‘Cursed be Canaan! The lowest of slaves will he be to his brothers’*” (Genesis 9:24–25). He did not say, “Cursed be Ham.” He went beyond Ham to Canaan, who would be father of the Canaanites, who would be the tribes that served Israel when they entered the promised land. Noah also said:

... “*Blessed be the LORD, the God of Shem! May Canaan be the slave of Shem. May God extend the territory of Japheth; may Japheth live in the tents of Shem, and may Canaan be his slave*” (Genesis 9:26–27).

It is interesting and necessary to know that Shem is the father of all the people called Semitic: the Jews and the Arabs. Ham is the father of those called Negroid, those who are not necessarily black but those in Egypt and that part of the world. Japheth is the father of the Europeans. The world was covered by these three sons. Genesis 9:28–29 says:

"After the flood Noah lived 350 years. Altogether, Noah lived 950 years, and then he died."

Special Note

Noah lived 350 years beyond the flood. Adam lived 243 years in the life of Methuselah. If Adam knew him, then he had 243 years to teach Methuselah the story of creation and the fall. Methuselah died the year of the flood, so he had 600 years to teach Noah about the fall, and Noah had 350 years after the flood to teach other people. Shem, Noah's son, lived into the lifetime of Jacob. These men did not need a written revelation, because word of mouth assured that the story was told. It is important to remember, even with righteous men evil crouches at the door. Sin is a persistent thing. The devil was still trying to destroy the seed of the woman by destroying the family of Noah, but he was not able to do it.

The Spread of the Nations

Genesis 10 contains the table of nations. The sons of Japheth, Ham, and Shem are listed here. From their sons came all of the nations of the world in ancient times. As far as that is concerned today, many of them are still wearing the names that they wore from this period of time. Japheth had seven sons: Gomer, Magog, Madai, Javan, Tubal, Meshech and Tiras (cf. Genesis 10:2–5). Of those sons not much is known about Tubal, Meshech and Tiras. They were probably the beginning of some European nations. But Gomer was the father of the people called Celts or Kelts, which includes the Franks and the German people. Magog was father of the Scythian people who were known for their development of the spear and their use of horses. Madai was the father of the Medes, who along with the Persians would be a worldwide empire near the close of the Old Testament. Javan was the father of the Greeks, which would be many of

the European people. Japheth was a strong, powerful empire before much time had passed, an empire of empires of all the people who would inhabit Europe.

Ham had four sons: Cush, Mizraim, Put and Canaan (cf. Genesis 10:6–20). He was the father of Canaan. Cush was the father of Ethiopia. They were one of the most powerful nations of the world in ancient times and are some of the most beautiful and stately people even today. The word Mizraim is the Hebrew word for Egypt. There was a time when the nation of Egypt ruled the entire world. Put was Libya, which is the northern part of Africa, and Canaan was Palestine. Canaan was the only weak link in all of Ham's children. That was why the curse was upon Canaan and not upon Ham. Ethiopia, Egypt and Libya were never considered to be a cursed people in ancient times. They were kingly, regal, and royal people. The curse was not upon Ham; it was not upon the Negroid race. It was only upon Canaan, Ham's son.

Shem had five sons: Elam, Asshur, Arphaxad, Lud, and Aram (cf. Genesis 10:21–31). A nation came from each of them. Elam was the father of the Elamites, who were one of the powerful ruling people in the area where the Tigris and Euphrates rivers come together. Asshur was the father of the Assyrian people, the ruling nation in the eighth century. Arphaxad was the father of the Chaldeans or the Babylonians, who were another ruling people in the eighth century. The father of the Jews, Abraham, was a Chaldean. Lud was the father of Nibia, and Aram was the father of the Syrians. These were all powerful people in Old Testament history.

The Building of Babel

God told Noah and his sons, "... *'Be fruitful and increase in numbers and fill the earth'*" (Genesis 9:1). God meant for them to scatter, but they did not do that. They

settled in the plain in Shinar. They started building a rallying point, a big tower whose height nearly reached under the heavens. It was called the Tower of Babel. Their reason for building the tower was “*... so that we may make a name for ourselves and not be scattered over the face of the whole earth*” (Genesis 11:4). God looked at this and said:

... If as one people speaking the same language they have begun to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them. Come, let us go down and confuse their language so they will not understand each other.” So the LORD scattered them from there over all the earth, and they stopped building the city. That is why it was called Babel—because there the LORD confused the language of the whole world. From there the LORD scattered them over the face of the whole earth (Genesis 11:6–9).

Unity is always powerful, but it is not always good. So God confused their tongues so that they began to talk to each other in languages that they did not understand. That was all it took to scatter the people. The people did not want to scatter, but they did God’s will and scattered. From there they began to multiply and replenish the earth. Since man was now involved in the activity of repopulating the earth, the geography of the Old Testament world becomes important.

Old Testament Geography

There are a lot of Old Testament geography facts that will help a Bible student when he is studying the Old Testament Scriptures. Just knowing the geography of a region can make a difference in understanding the

Scriptures. This is a great deal of material but look at the maps and try to remember the Old Testament geography because it is important in Old Testament History.

Bodies of Water

- The **Caspian Sea** is located in the north and to the east where Tehran is now the capital of Iran. It is the largest body of water completely surrounded by land.
- The **Persian Gulf** is located in the south and to the east. It was and still is the point of numerous conflicts. This is where civilization will center because into that gulf flow the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, which were the cradle of civilization.
- The **Red Sea** is located toward the bottom. The Red Sea has two gulfs, the Gulf of Suez (often times called the Suez Canal), which connects the Red sea to the Mediterranean Sea, and also the **Gulf of Aqaba**. Across the Gulf of Aqaba was where Israel marched on dry land and the Egyptian army was destroyed. On the other side of the Gulf of Aqaba is Mount Sinai, where God spoke the Law to Moses.
- The **Mediterranean Sea** is the large sea on the left side of the map; it is called the Great Sea in the Old Testament. Many interesting things happened around this sea both in the Old and New Testament.
- The **Dead Sea** is a small, very significant sea located at the bottom of the Jordan River. This sea is 1,400 feet below the level of the sea and has a 1,000 foot depth. The bottom of that sea is 2,400 feet below sea level.

Rivers

- The **Araxes River** is located in the far north. It forms the northern border of the biblical land.
- The **Tigris River** is the river on the east and north of the Mesopotamia area.

- The **Euphrates River** is located to the west and south of the Tigris. These two great rivers of the ancient world are mentioned so much in the Bible that the Euphrates River is sometimes referred to as “The River.”
- The **Orontes River** is located at the northern part of the land extension just before it curves and goes west to form the shore of the Mediterranean Sea in modern Lebanon. It is a river that flows north and then west into the Great Sea. It will not be of much importance in the Old Testament but was very important in the New Testament.
- The **Nile River** is located in Egypt. It is the most unusual river in the world. It has developed into such a great force that it will flow for 1,500 miles into the Mediterranean Sea without any tributary at all.
- The **Jordan River** is the river that flows into what is called the Great Rift, which starts at Mount Hermon and Mount Lebanon and runs all the way to the Transvaal in South Africa. It is the longest rift on earth.

Mountain Ranges

- The **Mount Ararat Range** is located in the north near the Araxes River. It forms the northern boundary of the Old Testament world.
- The **Caspian Range** is located south of the Caspian Sea.
- The **Zagros Range** is located in the south and provides a buffer between Mesopotamia and the rest of the world.
- The **Taurus Range**, which is where Saul of Tarsus was born, is located on the north shore of the Great Sea.
- The **Lebanon Range** is located on the west side of the Jordan River.
- The **Anti-Lebanon Range** is located on the east side of the Jordan River.

Countries

Of primary interest in this study are the following fifteen countries. They are located in three different divisions, looking at the ones located in the mountain ranges first.

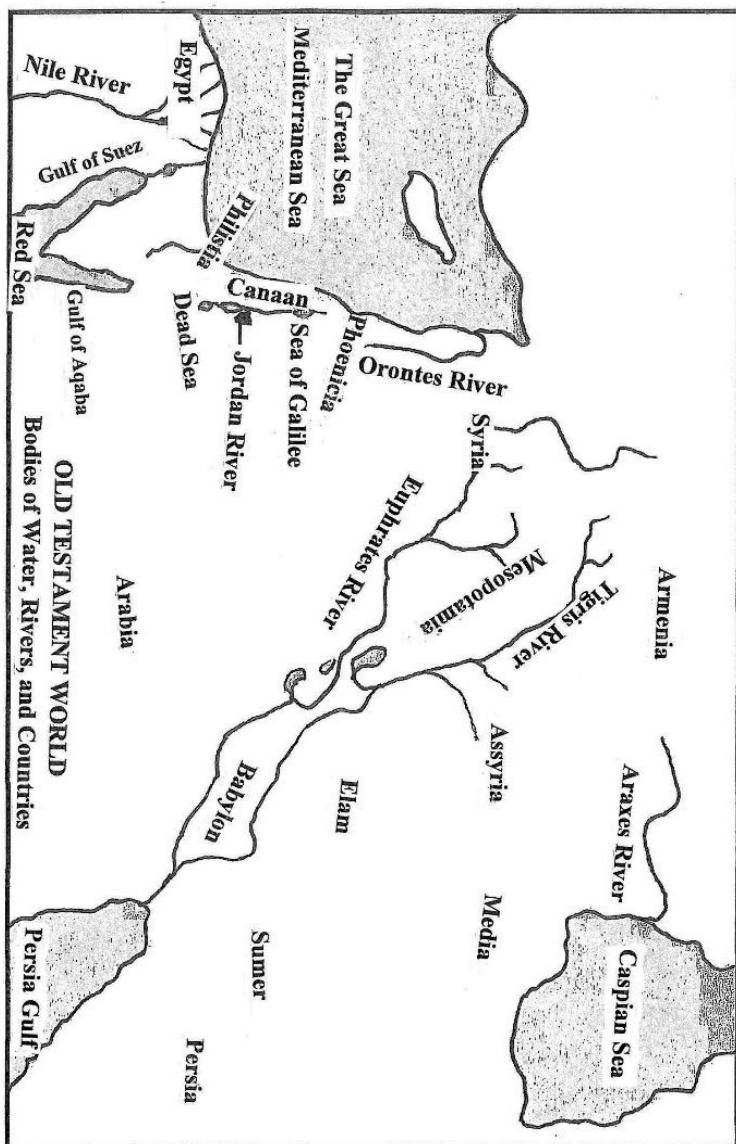
- **Armenia**, located in the Ararat Mountain Range, is not too important biblically although it does come up now and then.
- **Media**, located in the Caspian Mountain Range, is a very important country. They helped form the Medo-Persian empire later in the Old Testament.
- **Persia**, located in the Zagros Mountain Range, is modern-day Iran. This was one of the most powerful nations of the world.

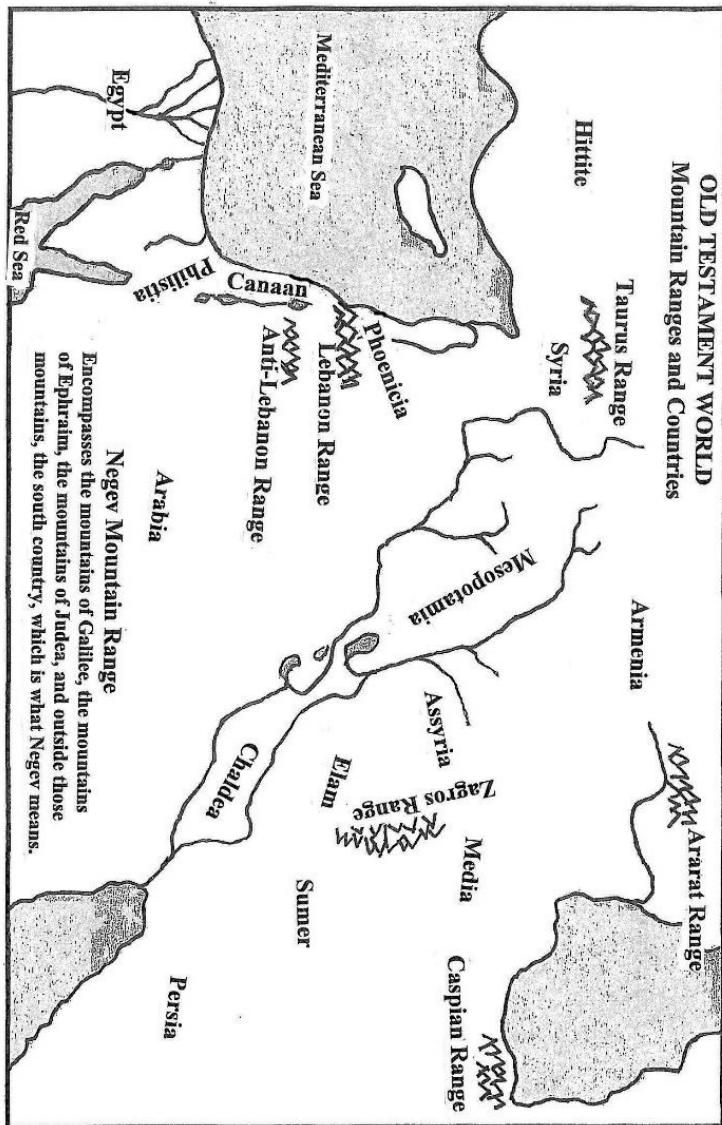
Countries in Mesopotamian Area

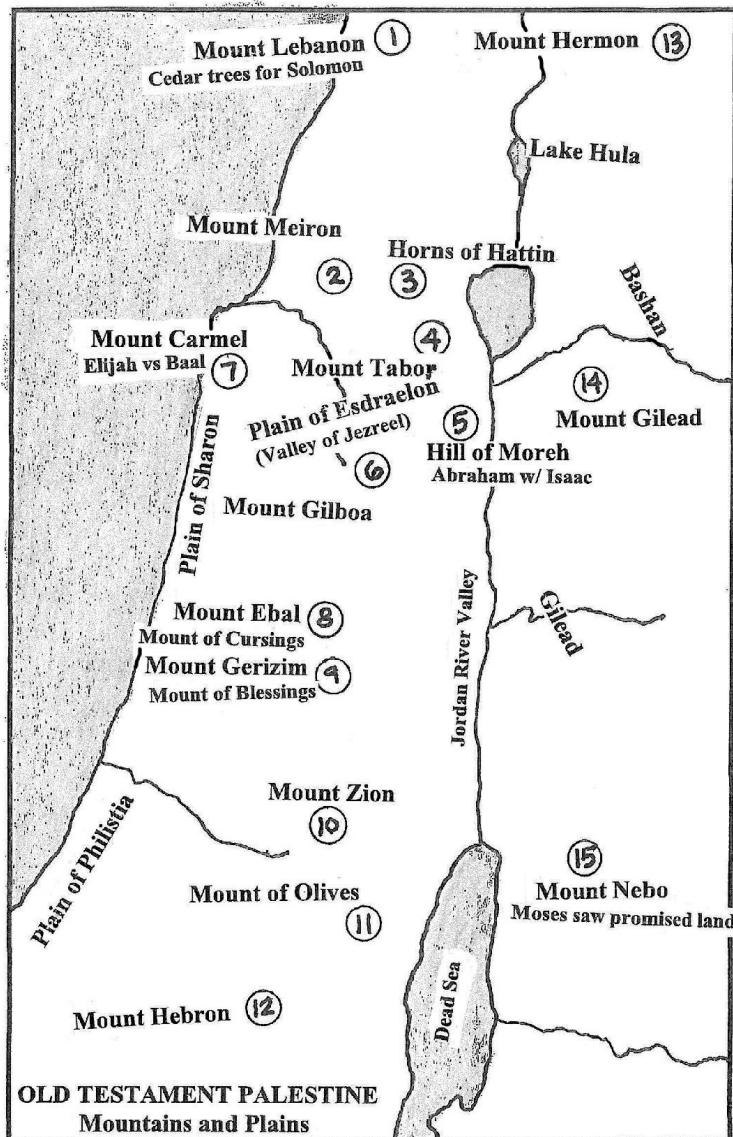
- **Mesopotamia**, which literally means “between the rivers,” was all the area located between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers.
- **Sumer**, although not very important biblically, was located where the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers come together. This country is the most ancient empire known to man.
- **Babylonia** (Chaldea) was a powerful empire where Abram was born.
- **Assyria**, with the capital of Nineveh, was also a very powerful empire.
- **Elam** was the country located on the eastern side of the Tigris River. The Elamites were a powerful people.
- **Arabia** was the land of the nomads located from Mesopotamia all the way to the Mediterranean Sea. Nobody except the Arabians crossed the desert until Alexander did so in order to defeat the Persian empire.

Countries East of the Mediterranean Sea

- The **Hittite** nation was located on the northern shore of the Mediterranean Sea. In the New Testament this was called Asia Minor and today it is Turkey.
- **Syria** is the country located in the extreme north coming down the Jordan River. Its capital was Damascus. It was famous for making steel and iron.
- **Phoenicia** was located above the hump in the Mediterranean Sea.
- **Philistia** was located below the hump in the Mediterranean Sea.
- **Palestine** (Canaan) was located between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea (the Great Sea).
- **Egypt** is located all the way in the south and is watered and made fruitful by the Nile River.







Palestine's Geography and Abraham's Journey (1)

Geography of Old Testament Palestine

There are some geographical facts that are important in the study of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and all the others who followed them. This is a study of Canaan, Palestine, and the Promised Land. Understanding the geography of the land helps to understand and interpret the meanings of Scriptures in the Old Testament. Old Testament Palestine could be divided into four geographical sections that did not change no matter who ruled the land.

Mountains are especially significant in the Bible because many times God brought a person up onto a mountain to offer a sacrifice or to hear from Him, or a man seemingly went to a high place because God was high and lifted up. Man wanted to go to a high and lifted up place to approach God in prayer, to recommit himself, or to sacrifice.

First consider the facts about the lands inhabited by the people of the Old Testament.

CANAAN

1. 6,600 Square Miles
2. Boundaries:
 - North: Mt. Lebanon
 - South: Negev, the Desert
 - East: Jordan River
 - West: The Great Sea (Mediterranean Sea)

PALESTINE

1. 12,000 Square Miles

2. Boundaries:

North: River Leontes, Mt. Lebanon and Mt. Hermon

South: Negev, the Desert

East: Arabian Desert

West: The Great Sea

PROMISED LAND

1. 60,000 Square Miles

2. Boundaries:

North: Hamath and Euphrates

South: River of Egypt

East: Euphrates and Arabian Desert

West: The Great Sea

Natural Divisions of the Land of Palestine

(map on page 69)

Costal Plains

- **Plain of Philistia** was located on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea down at the bottom. The Philistines who lived in the Plain of Philistia were a constant thorn in Israel's side.
- **Plain of Sharon** was centrally located at the hump in the Mediterranean Sea, which is Mount Carmel. It was an area where beautiful vegetation like the lily of the valley or the rose of Sharon grew. The rose of Sharon is not really a rose but a beautiful red and pink flower.
- **Plain of Ezraelon** (Valley of Jezreel) was located above the hump in the Mediterranean Sea coming down into the middle of the country at an angle. This was where Megiddo and Armageddon were. It was the great battlefield in the Old Testament. Today in Israel it is a beautiful orange grove area.

- The **Shephelah** is a little row of hills between the coastal plain and the central mountain range that formed a buffer state between the two nations that lived there.

Central Mountain Range

This mountain range that runs all the way down Palestine was called this because it is halfway between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River:

- **The Upper Galilean Range** is located in the north.
- **The Lower Galilean Range** is located between the Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea.
- **The Hill Country of Ephraim** is located right on the border between Israel and Judah.
- **Judea**
- **The Negev Mountain Range** encompasses the mountains of Galilee, the mountains of Ephraim, the mountains of Judea, and then outside those mountains, the south country, which is what Negev means.

The Waters of the Jordan Valley

The valley through which the Jordan River flows has three lakes, two of which are extremely important, and the other one is fairly important in this study of the Old Testament.

- **The Jordan River** is a very interesting river located between the Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea. It is only approximately 135 miles long, but tracing all of the river bed, it is over 225 miles long; it winds like a serpent, and most of the days of the year it looks like a serpent when viewed from above. However for about two months of the year, it flows from one bank to the other bank as a rushing torrent. The Jordan River would flow all the way to the Red Sea except for the big hole at the bottom called the Dead Sea.

- **Lake Hula (waters of Merom)** is located where there was once a city called Hazor. Several times there were gatherings here for the enemies of God, the tribes in the land to make a confederacy against the people of God.
- **The Sea of Galilee (Chinnereth)** is an interesting body of water as a part of the life blood of Galilee because it was a great fishing place, and many fisherman made their living there from the dawn of time. The water is 685 feet below sea level. The lake was thirteen miles long and seven miles across. It has never been without fish (fished out). It is a beautiful, clear, and commercially beneficial lake. The Jordan River flows out of it bigger than when it flows into it.
- **The Dead Sea** (Salt Sea) is located at the bottom of the Jordan River. The surface of the Dead Sea is 1,400 feet below sea level. The sea at its deepest point is 1,000 feet plus. That means that the hole that is this sea is 2,400 feet below sea level. No water flows out of it, which is why it is called the Dead Sea. Its water is salty because the only way any water gets out is by evaporation. Through centuries of evaporation, the sea has become over twenty-five percent solid. If a person were to take a pint jar of Dead Sea water and set it upon a shelf and leave it there for a while, before long twenty-five percent of that bottle of water would be absolutely solid. It has been that way all along with salt settled to the bottom. Millions of tons of pot ash are mined out of that lake every year, and it still stays the same height. There is no way a person could drown in that sea unless they intended to because people can lie flat on their backs and float. Even if they do not want to float, they float because it is twenty-five percent solid.

Below the Dead Sea there is a rift that the Jordan River flows through. Except for the hole that is the Dead Sea, the

Jordan River would keep on flowing. That rift goes all the way down to the Red Sea, underneath the Gulf of Aqaba's wing of the Red Sea, out on the other side, down through Sudan and Kenya. It is the most magnificent geographical fault in all the world. It was as if something or someone just ripped open the earth at that spot. It is most likely a result of the flood. That is the Jordan Valley.

The Eastern Range (The Table Land)

There are only a few mountains in this area, but there are three basic geographical and national borders.

- **Moab** was located in the south, parallel to the Dead Sea. The people in this country, which was the result of an incestuous relationship between Lot and one of his daughters, were kinsman to Israel.
- **Gilead** was located between the Dead Sea and just above the Sea of Galilee. It was a geographical designation, and many nations lived within the country of Gilead. There were many beautiful springs. The mud from these mineral springs had healing qualities, which explains the Scripture in Jeremiah 8:22: "*Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there? ...*"
- **Bashan** was located just above Gilead and actually mentioned in the Bible for political reasons. Many nations lived in this area. They raised the fattest cows and steers. The country was a beautiful farming country, where the grain grew over the heads of the animals. It was another very economically important area.

Central Range

Starting on the west side of the Jordan between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea was the central range of mountains. There are twelve mountains located to the west of the Jordan River:

- **Mount Lebanon** is a very important mountain located in the north. It has been the topic of political discussions in recent times. This is where the cedars grew that Solomon used to build his house and much of the temple.
- **Mount Meron** is located in the south. It does not really have any definite or great Old Testament significance, but one battle was fought there.
- “**Horns of Hattin**” are two peaks located at the northern end of the Sea of Galilee, about halfway between the Sea of Galilee and the Mediterranean Sea. This is probably the mountain, where Jesus spoke the Beatitudes.
- **Mount Tabor** is located at the southern end of the Sea of Galilee, a little bit closer to the Sea of Galilee rather than the Mediterranean Sea. This was where many of Israel’s armies gathered to fight against their enemies.
- The **Hill of Moreh** (Little Hermon) is located just below Mount Tabor. This mountain was thought to be the place where Abraham offered Isaac.
- **Mount Gilboa** is located inward and forms a valley with Mount Tabor. This valley was the site of many battles.
- **Mount Carmel** is located at the hump in the Mediterranean Sea. It was an important mountain in the Bible, possibly where Elijah looked out and finally prophesied about a great rain to come. It was on that mountain that he defeated the prophets of Baal, killing 450 of them.
- **Mount Ebal** is located in the south just before the northern end of the Dead Sea. This mountain was the Mount of Cursing where Joshua stood to read to the people of Israel.
- **Mount Gerizim** was considered the Mount of Blessing where Moses read the covenant of blessing as the

Israelites stood in the valley. They were in the hill country of Ephraim. These were the mountains where Joshua read the covenant of blessing once they had arrived in the promised land (cf. Deuteronomy 28–30; Joshua 8:30–35). Mountains and valleys make natural auditoriums. As Joshua and the priests read the blessings and the cursings the people said, “Amen.”

- **Mount Zion** is located inside the walls of Jerusalem.
- **Mount of Olives** is located just outside the walls of Jerusalem, which was just below the northern end of the Dead Sea about twenty miles inland.
- **Mount Hebron** is located in the south about two-thirds of the way down the Dead Sea. This was the mountain near where Abraham lived and was one of the mountains on which Samson dwelled. It was a very important biblical mountain.

On the eastern side of the Jordan River there are only three mountains of significance:

- **Mount Hermon** is located in the north. It was more important in the New Testament than in the Old, but there were several important incidents that occurred there.
- **Mount Gilead** is located about halfway between the Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea, right on the edge of the desert. This was an important place primarily because it made a barrier between Israel and its enemies.
- **Mount Nebo** is located just east of the northern end of the Dead Sea. It was from here that Moses viewed the promised land.

Geography in and of itself is not very interesting, but this is the geography upon which most of the Old Testament history occurred. Many times geography determines much of

what happens, so it is important to know these geographical facts, and that will help a student to understand what is being said in the Bible. Study the maps; get familiar with them in the study of Abraham and other heroes in Bible. Sometimes the Scripture says “*they went up to*” or “*they went down to*” and knowing the geography of this land will help. Sometimes the people were victorious over their enemies and sometimes they were defeated, either because their enemies possessed this mountain stronghold or they did not possess this particular mountain stronghold.

The Ten Generations of Shem

Genesis 11:10–12:8

Genesis 11 begins a study of history that this geography supports. Remember that the people decided to stay in one place and build the tower of Babel instead of scattering and replenishing the earth as God wanted them to. God looked down from heaven and said, “... *If as one people speaking the same language they have begun to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them*” (Genesis 11:6). God confused their language, and they began to speak in different languages and could not understand one another. So the people scattered throughout all of the world.

The genealogy of Shem is given in Genesis 11:10–32. This is very important because it shows where Abram came from. Genesis 5 lists the first ten generations of the earth, from Adam to Noah. The genealogy resumes two years after the flood and lists ten more generations and arrives at Abram. Notice the fathers, their sons, and how long they lived:

- Two years after the flood, when **Shem** was 100 years old, he became the father of Arphaxad. After he became

the father of Arphaxad, Shem lived 500 years and had other sons and daughters. So Shem lived for 600 years.

- Arphaxad at 35 bore Salah and lived 438 years.
- Salah became the father of Eber and lived 433 years.
- Eber became the father of Peleg and lived 464 years.
- Peleg became the father of Reu and lived 239 years.

Notice the drop in the number of years that men were living. They had been living 900 years before the flood. Shem lived 600 years; he was a flood person. Then it dropped down to 400 and then to 200.

- Reu became the father of Serug and lived 239 years.
- Serug became the father of Nahor and lived 230 years.
- Nahor became the father of Terah and lived 148 years.
There is another drop in the number of years.
- Terah was seventy years old when he became the father Abram, Nahor and Haran.
- **Abram**

That is the account of Shem. Ten generations are covered from Shem to Terah and Abram. An interesting thing is that Shem was still alive. Through all of this time he was alive even when Terah died. He lived into the life of Jacob. Shem lived for thirteen generations of people, and he could tell those thirteen generations what he had heard directly from Methuselah, who had heard directly from Adam. They told the story of the fall, the story of sin, the story of the flood, and many other tales. History was being repeated by eyewitnesses or by those who talked to the eyewitness.

The Beginning of Abram's Life

The account of Abram's life begins in Genesis 11:27. He was the prime character in the account of his father's life:
"This is the account of Terah. Terah became the father of

Abram, Nahor and Haran..." Abram's life is covered in Genesis 11:27–25:8. He was born in the Ur of the Chaldeans. Ur is on the map where the Tigris and Euphrates rivers come together in Mesopotamia, on the Euphrates just up from where the rivers join. Ur has been excavated, and it has been discovered that it was a city way beyond its time. In fact, it was the most modern city of its day. They not only lived in houses, when most of the world lived in tents, but they also had running water in those houses, and most of them even had a way to heat that water. They had hot and cold running water. Each person had a bedroom or at least many people had many bedrooms in each house which was not normally the case either. In those days, when a house was built, it was normally one big room where they ate, slept, and played. They did everything in that one single room. So Abram was born in a city beyond its time, and he was a rich person because he had many flocks, servants, and slaves. Abram was not some little farmer or little shepherd. He was a sheik, a person who ruled a large household.

Abram's Journey

The statement is made in Genesis 11:26, "*After Terah had lived 70 years, he became the father of Abram, Nahor and Haran.*" This reading seems to imply that Abram was the oldest, but reading further his father lived 205 years and died when Abram was 75 years old. So Abram was born in Terah's 130th year. Why was he named first? Because he was what the Bible calls "firstborn." He was the preeminent son of Terah.

There are only two things that really need to be remembered from Ur of the Chaldees. It was here that Abram was born and where he was first called by God. This first call is not mentioned in Genesis. However, in Acts 7:2–3 when Stephen was speaking to the Sanhedrin, he said:

... “Brothers and fathers, listen to me! The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham while he was still in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Haran. ‘Leave your country and your people,’ God said, ‘and go to the land I will show you.’”

Haran was located in northern Mesopotamia. Genesis 11:31 says:

Terah took his son Abram, his grandson Lot son of Haran, and his daughter-in-law Sarai, the wife of his son Abram, and together they set out from Ur of the Chaldeans to go to Canaan. But when they came to Haran, they settled there.

Abram's father traveled with him from Ur to Haran. However, Abram had to wait until his father died to go on to Canaan. The reason he had to wait is seen in the Book of Joshua, when the people were asked to choose whom they would serve: “*... Throw away the gods your forefathers worshiped beyond the River ... and serve the LORD*” (Joshua 24:14). Godly people mixed with evil people usually end up evil. Abram's fathers were idolaters. That is why Abram had to get out from among them; otherwise there would be a repetition of the flood. Abram had to be separated and carried to a desert land in order not to have the same thing happen that happened in Genesis 6.

In Haran there are two things to remember: Abram's father died at the age of 205 (cf. Genesis 11:32). In Genesis 12 God spoke to Abram and said:

... “Leave from your country, your people and your father’s household and go to the land I will show you. I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you

will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.” So Abram went, as the LORD had told him; and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he set out from Haran (Genesis 12:1–4).

This was the second call from God to Abram to go to the land He had chosen for him.

When God called him to go, Abram did not know where he was going, why he was going, or when he would get there until God told him, “... ‘To your offspring I will give this land’ ...” (Genesis 12:7). That was where God wanted him to be. That is faith. Abram got up and went to a land that he knew nothing about and having no assurance of the future except that God said, “I’m going to go with you.”

Abram and his family journeyed to Haran, where his father died. He was called out of Ur of the Chaldees; he stopped in Haran until Terah died, and then he went on to Palestine. Genesis 12:4–9 reveals the next part of Abram’s journey:

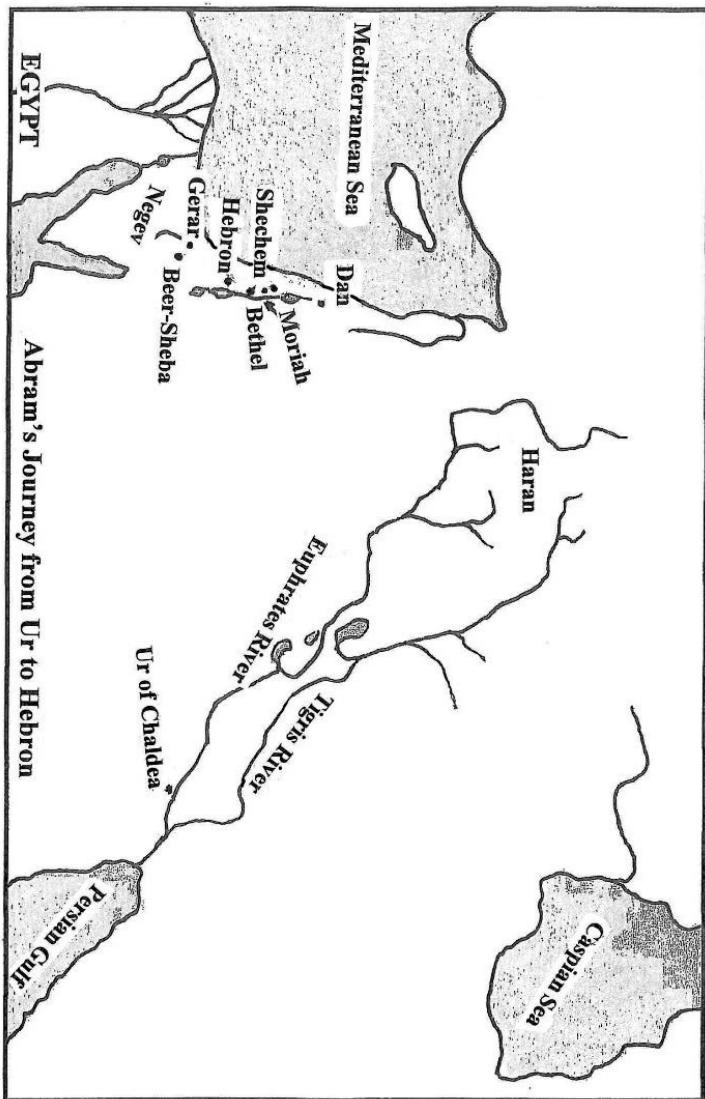
So Abram left, as the LORD had told him; and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he set out from Haran. He took his wife Sarai, his nephew Lot ... they set out for the land of Canaan, and they arrived there. Abram traveled through the land as far as the site of the great tree of Moreh at Shechem. At that time the Canaanites were in the land. The LORD appeared to Abram and said, “To your offspring I will give this land.” So he built an altar there to the LORD, who had appeared to him. From there he went on toward the hills east of Bethel and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east. There he built an altar to the LORD and called on the name of the

LORD. Then Abram set out and continued toward the Negev.

Abram's first stop after Haran was at Shechem, which was right between Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim. It was here that Abram began to do something that he did as soon as he arrived at a place, “*...There he built an altar to the LORD and called on the name of the LORD*” (Genesis 12:8).

There was not enough pasture land there for Abram's sheep, so he moved on and came to a place called Bethel. It was not called Bethel until later. When Abram got there it was called Luz which means “light.” Later on, it would be called Bethel, which means “House of God” because it was here that God would appear to Jacob and give him the vision of the angels going up and down on the ladder. Abram was in the land, but he could not stay there because he had many sheep to pasture, so he moved on and “*...continued toward the Negev*” (Genesis 12:9).

Think for a moment about Abram's mind set. What was he thinking? He might be thinking, “What are you doing, God? You took me from my home, from a settled community, and from a fine house. Now I am living in tents, don't have anything to feed my sheep, and you said you were going to bless me. Where is that blessing that you offered me?” Maybe Abram did not say that, because he was building an altar and calling on the LORD. There is a lesson here. When you do not know what the LORD is doing and when times are difficult, build your altar, call upon God and wait by faith.



Abraham's Journey (2)

Review

Genesis 12:1–14:16

The account of Abram's life began in Genesis 11:27. Remember he was the prime character in the account of his father's life: "*This is the account of Terah. Terah became the father of Abram, Nahor and Haran . . .*" Abram's life is covered in Genesis 11:27–25:8. All of the patriarchs journeyed. They lived in tents and never had a stable place to live. Abram started out in Ur of the Chaldees, which was near Babylon. It was an ancient city. When it was dug up, it was found to be a very modern city, advanced beyond the norm. Abram left a stable house, a place perhaps with his own bedroom, a place with hot and cold running water and many servants.

The Twofold Promise Made to Abraham

When God called Abram both in Ur of the Chaldees and in Haran, He made a statement with a twofold promise in the midst of that call:

The LORD had said to Abram, "Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you. I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless

those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you” (Genesis 12:1–3).

The name Abram means “exalted father.” Later on, God changed his name to Abraham, which means “exalted father of a multitude.” The reason he was going to be called Abraham was because from him would come an entire nation. That is what God promised. He said, “If you will just do what I tell you and go to a land that I will show you...” Notice that God did not give Abram a map. He did not say, “Now here is where you are going.” He just said, “If you have the faith to get up and head in the direction I want you to head and not stop until I tell you to stop, then I am going to bless you. I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you. I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you, I will curse, and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.”

The Twofold Promise

Here is the promise from God: “I will make you a great nation that no one will be able to curse, and you and your seed will bless all the nations of the earth.” Abram did not know it yet, but he had been chosen out of all the people of the earth for the seed promise in Genesis 3:15. Of all the families that had been mothered on the earth in ten generations since Noah’s ark rested, God had chosen the family of Abram, and through his family He was going to multiply its seed. God would later say that they would be multiplied as the stars of the heavens, but here was a promise with two sides to it made to Abram. It was a promise concerning a nation and a promise concerning a seed. Abram’s nation would be great, numerous, powerful, and his seed would bless all the nations of the earth. The rest of the Old Testament would be based on this promise. This

was the promise of a nation, and from that nation would come a tribe, and from that tribe a family, and from that family would come a person who was going to bless all the nations of the earth.

The Journey South to the Negev

Abram left the country and went into Palestine. He stopped in Shechem but only for a short time because there was not enough grain there to sustain his great herds of sheep and cattle. Then he went into Palestine and came to Bethel, but did not spend much time there either for the same reason. There was not enough pasture for all his animals. Genesis 12:9 says, "*Then Abram set out and continued toward the Negev.*" Other versions may read "...*toward the south,*" which is what the word Negev means. The Negev was the desert region below Palestine, between Palestine and Egypt. Why was he going into the Negev when there was no pasture there? He knew that, however, on the other side of the Negev was a land that would have pasture when no other land had pasture. It was the land of Egypt. Egypt would have grain in spite of the fact that it was in the desert because the great Nile river flowed through Egypt. They could get water from the Nile and spread it out over the desert land. They would be able to grow beautiful crops. It was much like irrigated lands in the world today.

Genesis 12:10 speaks of Abram's experiences in Egypt: "*Now there was a famine in the land, and Abram went down to Egypt to live there for a while because the famine was severe.*" Later on, when there was a famine, Abram's grandson, Jacob, would send his children to Egypt to get grain. There was always grain in Egypt because of the Nile.

Genesis 12:11–13 shows that Abram's faith, though mature, was not perfect:

As he was about to enter Egypt, he said to his wife Sarai, "I know what a beautiful woman you are.

When the Egyptians see you, they will say, ‘This is his wife.’ Then they will kill me but will let you live. Say you are my sister, so that I will be treated well for your sake and my life will be spared because of you.”

It might be tempting to criticize Abram because he was treating Sarai as if he were more important than her. That was very culturally true in his century; women were not treated with the importance and significance they are today. But God had told him, “I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless all the world through you.” If he died, then God was not going to be able to do that. In a very human and immature way, Abram tried to help God out of a difficulty. He seemed to be saying, “You have me down here where I am going to get killed, so I have to help you out, God. I am going to plan a way that I can survive my stay down here, and that way is to let the Egyptians believe this beautiful woman is not really my wife but only my sister.”

Abram, in fact, would later defend this statement when he did it again to Abimelech, the Canaanite king. He said, “*Besides, she really is my sister, the daughter of my father though not of my mother; and she became my wife*” (Genesis 20:12). Even a lie can be the truth, and the truth can be a lie. If a person says something that is wrong but they do not know it is wrong, then it is not a lie. But anything that is told to deceive, whether the thing told is actually truth or not, it is a lie if it was told with the intention of making someone believe something that is not the truth. When Sarai said, “He is my brother,” and when Abram said, “She is my sister,” what did Abram want the Egyptians to hear? “She is only my sister. I am only her brother.” He intended for them to believe a lie, and they did.

Notice what happened because of that lie in Genesis 12:14–15: “*When Abram came to Egypt, the Egyptians saw*

that she was a very beautiful woman. And when Pharaoh's officials saw her, they praised her to Pharaoh, and she was taken into his palace." Sarai was not taken to the palace just for dinner. She was going to become a part of Pharaoh's harem, a part of his group of wives, and she was willing to do that for Abram's sake. Pharaoh treated Abram well for her sake, and he acquired sheep, cattle, male and female donkeys, menservants, maidservants, and camels. God had promised to bless Abram, and despite what he did in Egypt God fulfilled His promise. Abram left Egypt much richer than when he entered Egypt, because God was with him. In spite of the fact that he was weak in faith, and in spite of the fact that he treated his wife with disrespect, God was still going to bless Abram because He had made a promise, and God keeps His promises.

Abram was a righteous man, so he did not continue in this lie. He was not going to continue in this momentary disbelief. Abram was a man of faith. Abram was in the land of Egypt; he was being blessed by Pharaoh, but Sarai was about to be taken as one of Pharaoh's wives. What did God do? Genesis 12:17–19 says:

But the LORD inflicted serious diseases on Pharaoh and his household because of Abram's wife Sarai. So Pharaoh summoned Abram. "What have you done to me?" he said. "Why didn't you tell me she was your wife? Why did you say, "She is my sister," so that I took her to be my wife? Now then, here is your wife. Take her and go!"

Abram was not going to be able to eat Egypt's grain anymore because he had lied to Pharaoh. Genesis 12:20 says, "*Then Pharaoh gave orders about Abram to his men, and they sent him on his way, with his wife and everything he had.*" They did not afflict Abram with any persecution. Why? They did not because God had probably told Pharaoh

the same thing He told Abimelech later in Genesis 20:7: “*Now return the man’s wife, for he is a prophet ... if you do not return her, you may be sure that you and all yours will die.*” Pharaoh wanted Abram out of the land because he did not trust him anymore, but Pharaoh did not harm him because he believed him to be a man of God. Pharaoh was a good man. He had more than one wife and was a pagan. He was also a good man because he wanted to do what the God of heaven wanted him to do.

At Bethel Abram Worshiped God

Abram went from Egypt back to the Negev, and then he went back to the city of Bethel, which was where he had been living prior to going to Egypt. This was where he built an altar and called upon God:

So Abram went up from Egypt to the Negev, with his wife and everything he had, and Lot went with him. Abram had become very wealthy in livestock and in silver and gold. From the Negev he went from place to place until he came to Bethel, to the place between Bethel and Ai where his tent had been earlier and where he had first built an altar. There Abram called on the name of the LORD (Genesis 13:1–4).

Abram must have been really confused and searching in his mind, “Am I still in covenant relationship with God? Is all still well? I know I have lied. I know I have sinned. I cannot find any grain. Is God going to bless me?” He was getting richer all the time, but riches do not do much good when there is no food. It was here that there was trouble between Abram’s herdsmen and Lot’s herdsmen:

Now Lot, who was moving about with Abram, also had flocks and herds and tents. But the land could

not support them while they stayed together, for their possessions were so great that they were not able to stay together. And quarreling arose between Abram's herdsmen and the herdsmen of Lot. The Canaanites and Perizzites were also living in the land at that time. So Abram said to Lot, "Let's not have any quarreling between you and me, or between your herdsmen and mine, for we are brothers. [This does not mean that they should not disagree, but it means they should not quarrel.] Is not the whole land before you? Let's part company. If you go to the left, I'll go to the right; if you go to the right, I'll go to the left" (Genesis 13:5–9).

The best way to solve a problem is to let the other person make the decision about what needs to be done. So he told Lot to decide which land he wanted, and whatever Lot decided Abram would take the other land. Genesis 13:10–12 records what that decision was:

Lot looked up and saw that the whole plain of the Jordan [That's the little lagoon now at the bottom of the Dead Sea, but at that time it was a well watered plain.] was well watered, like the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt, towards Zoar (This was before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah). So Lot chose for himself the whole plain of the Jordan and set out toward the east. The two men parted company: Abram lived in the land of Canaan, while Lot lived among the cities of the plain and pitched his tents near Sodom.

The *New International Version* says that Lot “*pitched his tents near Sodom.*” That is not correct. Lot lived in Sodom. He may have had his servants’ tents and his flocks outside of Sodom, but he lived inside the city (cf. Genesis

19:1–3). Genesis 13:13 says, “*Now the men of Sodom were wicked and were sinning greatly against the LORD.*” Their sins were what today is sometimes called sodomy and homosexuality. It is man making love to man. They did it intensely, and they did it as their way of life. It was a way of living to them. Sodom was an immoral, ungodly city in the midst of the best pasture land in all the world. Lot was going to be in trouble: “*Do not be misled: ‘Bad company corrupts good character’*” (1 Corinthians 15:33).

Abram seemed to have gotten the dirty end of this deal because all he got was the mountainous region where it would be hard to sustain a great number of sheep, goats, and cattle. Lot, on the other hand, had “*the plain,*” the flat area was well watered and well stocked with food and everything the animals needed. In Genesis 13:14, “*The LORD said to Abram after Lot had parted from him, ‘Lift up your eyes from where you are and look north and south, east and west.’*” From a mountain side or from the top of a mountain, he could see further than from the plains. Abram saw all of what was called the promised land (cf. Hebrews 11:9). In Genesis 13:15–18 God said:

“All the land that you see I will give to you and your offspring forever. I will make your offspring like the dust of the earth, so that if anyone could count the dust, then your offspring could be counted. Go, walk through the length and breadth of the land, for I am giving it to you.” So Abram moved his tents and went to live near the great trees of Mamre at Hebron [Remember where Mount Hebron was — about halfway down the Dead Sea], where he built an altar to the LORD.

Notice what Abram did immediately. He built an altar to the LORD. In the end he did not get the bad end of the deal. Lot may have received the best single locality, but it was

Abram who possessed God's land. It was Abram who received God's blessing, and it was Abram, not Lot, who built an altar to the LORD. Lot was not an evil man. He was living in an unrighteous place. In the 2 Peter 2:7, Peter called Lot "*a righteous man.*" He kept his personal integrity, but there were consequences for living among the wicked.

Hebron, Trouble from the East

In Genesis 14 trouble came from the east:

At this time Amraphel king of Shinar, Arioch king of Ellasar, Kedorlaomer king of Elam and Tidal king of Goiim went to war against Bera king of Sodom, Birsha king of Gomorrah, Shinab king of Admah, Shemeber king of Zeboiim, and the king of Bela (that is, Zoar). All these latter kings joined forces in the Valley of Siddim (the Salt Sea). For twelve years they had been subject to Kedorlaomer, but in the thirteenth year they rebelled (Genesis 14:1–4).

In the fourteenth year, Chedorlaomer came down and defeated their cities and carried away all their kings, all their people, all their gold, all their silver, Lot and his family, all of his flocks, all of his gold, and all of his silver. These kings were kings from the area called Mesopotamia. They carried off Abram's nephew, Lot, and his possessions while he was living in Sodom. Lot had pitched his tent near Sodom to begin with, but at this point he was living in Sodom. One person escaped and went to tell Abram what had happened. Abram gathered together his army to deliver Lot. Genesis 14:13–14 says:

One who had escaped came and reported this to Abram the Hebrew [this is the first time the word

Hebrew is found in the Bible. The word Hebrew means the son of Eber]. Now Abram was living near the great trees of Mamre the Amorite, a brother of Eshcol and Aner, all of whom were allied with Abram. When Abram heard that his relative had been taken captive, he called out the 318 trained men born in his household...

Abram had a huge number of servants and a huge household. His slaves had 318 trained men. That means 318 men over twenty years of age trained to fight battles. This was Abram's standing army. This was a good sized battle number. "During the night Abram divided his men to attack them ..." (Genesis 14:15).

Dan and the Deliverance of Lot

Abram went to Dan, which was way up in the north near Lake Hula. He marched a two to three days hard journey. He came upon the city at night, divided his men and attacked the place at night. That was unheard of in that day. Abram proved to be a smart military captain.

...he routed them, pursuing them as far as Hobah, north of Damascus [that is another two hundred miles]. He recovered all the goods and brought back his relative Lot and his possessions, together with the women and the other people (Genesis 14:15–16).

So Abram rescued Lot. Trouble came from the east, and Lot was carried away, but Lot was rescued from this trouble. God is in control even when man is out of control.

Observations

What is being taught here? Many times Bible readers do not take time in reading the Old Testament to just stop and ask, "Why is this recorded? What should I be learning?" Notice several things:

- Abram was blessed when he finally turned things over to God. When he tried to work it out on his own in Egypt, it boiled down to a curse, although God blessed him physically. When he came back to the land, he wandered around the south land, which was a desert. God made him wander back and forth, trying to find some pasture for his flocks and herds. When he finally got back to Bethel and the altar where once he had called upon God, he called upon God again. Blessings were then given to him. People need to learn that when they have messed up, and when trouble has arisen in their life, they need to turn it over to God.
- Bible students can learn a lot from Lot already. In looking at this nephew of Abram's, he was a person who was a righteous man but who did not have the maturity that Abram had. He did not have the altar Abram had. He did not have the worshipful dedication to God that Abram had. He was seemingly more interested in his flocks than he was in God. Given a right to choose, he chose the one that would benefit him the most physically and financially. He pitched his tent, his place of dwelling, at the back door of the wicked. He was soon in their living room.
- Abram, on the other hand, was still over there in a rather desolate place. His sheep were not feeding on the rich grasses that Lot's sheep were feeding upon. But he was feeding his soul upon his relationship and fellowship with God. Abram was blessed.

- Lot had everything that the world could desire. He had a good home. He had a good wife. He had good children. He had a fine home in one of the most modern cities of that area. He was living not in a tent, but in a place of mortar, brick and stone. He was no longer dependent upon river streams for his water, but water flowed down the streets of the city where he lived. He could get water from his well and, not have to search for another well. His sheep were being fed on the finest pasture land in all the world, but his soul was beginning to be warped by Sodom's call. He got in trouble. A person always gets in trouble when he makes his tent among the wicked. He ended up having to be delivered. He could not deliver himself; he was helpless.
- Abram, in the lesser place, had more people and more power because he was in contact with God. Some significant things were going to happen to Abram that point out the character of Abram. Consider the following preview. Abram could have been lifted up in pride and temptation as he journeyed to deliver his young nephew Lot. He could have been thinking about preaching to Lot. "I told you so. You need to be righteous like I am." He could have been a proud individual.
- Abram met a priest of God on the way back from rescuing Lot: "Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine. He was priest of God Most High, and he blessed Abram...Then Abram gave him a tenth of everything (Genesis 14:18–20). This might mean simply a tenth of all that Abram got from the kings of Mesopotamia, which would be a lot, since that was all the riches of the cities of the Plain, or maybe Abram had just been storing up a tenth of his possessions. The tenth belonged to God, and the Bible teaches that from start to finish. Maybe he had been storing up that tenth to

find the person, the representative of God, to whom he was to pay his tithe.

Abram wanted the world to know that he served and trusted God. All of the victories that he had won over the kings of Mesopotamia, all of the honor that he had received in battle and in victory, all of his riches, all of his slaves, and all of his house belonged to God. He proved that all things belonged to God by giving the first tenth of all that he had to God. Abram, here in the middle of the story, belonged to God. The question that all men need to answer is, "**Do you belong to God?**"

Abraham's Journey (3)

Genesis 14:17–15:21

Review and Introduction

This chapter opens in the middle of the study of Abraham's life. Abraham's journey had sixteen different stations. The first one was in Ur of the Chaldeans, down where the Tigris and the Euphrates join before they enter the Persian Gulf. This was Abram's place of birth and the location of his first call by God to leave his land, which had the intent of getting Abram into a country where God would make of him a great nation and bless him.

A twofold promise was made to Abram there. That promise consisted of the fact that his seed would become a great nation and would possess the land. Then his seed (that was a singular seed) would bless all the nations of the earth. So Abram would continue the promise of the seed made to the woman. He left Ur with his father and perhaps his mother, his wife, his nephew Lot, and Lot's wife. They went to Haran, which was on the Euphrates where the city of Nineveh would be in days to come. It was here that his father died. His father was 205 years old when he died, and Abram was seventy-five years old. So Terah was 130 years old when Abram was born.

In Haran God called Abram again, making the same promise:

"I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be

a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.” (Genesis 12:2–3).

Abraham left Haran, not knowing where he was going. When he arrived in the land of Canaan, God told him that was the place. So Abram went to Shechem, which was between Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim. He pitched his tent and built an altar, but there was not enough pasture land for his sheep. So he went to Bethel, and the same thing happened. There was not enough pasture land for his sheep. So finally, he passed through the Negev, the south country, and came to Egypt. There he told for the first time the lie that he would tell twice about Sarai. He said of Sarai, “She is my sister,” and she said, “He is my brother.” Technically, that was true because they had the same father and different mothers, but they intended to deceive others, so it was a lie. They wanted Egypt and Pharaoh to hear these words: “She is only my sister, and we are not married.” Without knowing it, Pharaoh took her to be one of his wives. Then God cursed Pharaoh’s house until finally Pharaoh concluded this was wrong and brought in Abram. He said: “Why didn’t you tell me she was your wife? Get out of here!”

Abram was forced to leave Egypt, so they went back to Bethel. Again they were traveling without enough pasture land for the flock, so there was trouble between his herdsmen and Lot’s herdsmen about which one of them was greater. So Abram said to Lot:

... “Let’s not have any quarreling between you and me, or between your herdsmen and mine, for we are brothers. Is not the whole land before you?” ... Lot looked up and saw that the whole plain of the Jordan ... Lot chose for himself the whole plain of

the Jordan and set out toward the east. The two men parted company: Abram lived in the land of Canaan, while Lot lived among the cities of the plain and pitched his tents near Sodom. Now the men of Sodom were wicked and were sinning greatly against the LORD... The LORD said to Abram after Lot had parted from him, “Lift up your eyes from where you are and look north and south, east and west. All the land that you see I will give to you and your offspring forever. I will make your offspring like the dust of the earth, so that if anyone could count the dust, then your offspring could be counted” (Genesis 13:8–16).

Kings came from the east and captured the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, taking all of the people, along with Lot, back to Mesopotamia. He made the mistake of living in the wrong city. So Abram gathered his army, 318 men born in his own house, and marched up to Dan, which is in the north by the waters of Meron. He defeated these Mesopotamian kings brought Lot back safely.

Second Stop at Hebron

Abram's Meeting with Melchizedek

Abram then headed back home. On his way back home in Genesis 11, several very significant things happened. The ninth point of the Abram's journey was at Hebron. Notice that Abram met Melchizedek in Genesis 14:17–19:

After Abram returned from defeating Kedorlaomer and the kings allied with him, the king of Sodom came out to meet him in the Valley of Shaveh (that is, the King's Valley). Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine. He was priest of

*God Most High, and he blessed Abram, saying,
“Blessed be Abram by God Most High ...”*

Notice that Melchizedek was a priest of God, a priest of Abram's God. He blessed Abram. The writer of Hebrews said, “*And without doubt the lesser person is blessed by the greater*” (Hebrews 7:7). Melchizedek was a greater man than Abram. He claimed that greatness by blessing Abram. Abram admitted Melchizedek's greatness by accepting the blessing:

...and he blessed Abram, saying, “Blessed be Abram by God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth. And blessed be God Most High, who delivered your enemies into your hand.” Then Abram gave him a tenth of everything (Genesis 14:19–20).

This is all that Genesis says about Melchizedek. The writer of Hebrews said more. In the Book of Hebrews Melchizedek was called a priest without father and without mother, without genealogy. Of course, he had a father and mother, but the idea is that his priesthood did not depend upon who his father or mother was. The Book of Hebrews says: “*...He has become a high priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek*” (Hebrews 6:20). Of course he died because the author of the Book of Hebrews calls him a man. But his priesthood was not dependent upon time. He came on the scene as a priest, and he left the scene as a priest:

So Christ also did not take upon himself the glory of becoming a high priest. But God said to him ... “You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek” ...he learned obedience from what he

suffered ... was designated by God to be high priest in the order of Melchizedek (Hebrews 5: 5–10).

The writer of Hebrews was quoting Psalms 110:4: “*You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek.*” Jesus’ priesthood did not depend on who Mary was or who Joseph was. Jesus came into this world a priest, and He left this world a priest. Notice that Abram gave Melchizedek a tenth of everything he got from Sodom and Gomorrah and was carrying back with him. Or perhaps this was a tenth of everything he possessed. Either way, the tenth belonged to God. It belonged to God before the law, during the law, and after the law.

Melchizedek was a mystery person. Where did he come from? How did he learn about Jehovah? When was he called to be a priest? When did he die? None of these questions have answers. Here is what is known about him. His name means “king of righteousness.” He was the king of Salem, Salem meaning “peace.” So, he was the king of peace. He lived in the city that later would be called Jerusalem. He was probably a Jebusite, if not a Canaanite, and he was a priest of God in a time when God was calling one man out of an idolatrous world so he could trace his seed line through him. Abram was still not the best man on earth. Melchizedek was a better man. The king of Sodom was there while all of this was going on. Notice what the king of Sodom said to Abram in Genesis 14:21–24:

The king of Sodom said to Abram, “Give me the people and keep the goods for yourself.” But Abram said to the king of Sodom, “I have raised my hand to the LORD, God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth, and have taken an oath that I will accept nothing belonging to you, not even a thread or the thong of a sandal, so that you will never be able to

say, ‘I made Abram rich.’ I will accept nothing but what my men have eaten and the share that belongs to the men who went with me — to Aner, Eshcol and Mamre. Let them have their share.’”

These were the men who lived around Hebron and were from Canaanite tribes. Abram was saying, “They deserve their pay. I will take nothing. Let my 318 men eat whatever they need to eat while they travel, and you give these three men their share of all the things we have taken from the kings who defeated Sodom and Gomorrah.” So Abram had given a tenth of everything to God. He had not even eaten of their things. His 318 men had been sustained in food by the things of Sodom and Gomorrah, and these three people got their portion. Men need to learn the lesson that we do not prosper off of the wicked. We do not live according to their things and according to their ways. The most important thing in this reading is the application that the writer of Hebrews made of this to Christ when he wrote in Hebrews 7:16–21:

One who has become a priest not on the basis of a regulation as to his ancestry but on the basis of the power of an indestructible life. For it is declared, “You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek”...And it was not without an oath! Others became priests without any oath, but he became a priest with an oath when God said to him: “The LORD has sworn and will not change his mind: ‘You are a priest forever.’”

There is no indication that Melchizedek’s father was a priest or that his son was a priest. Jesus had no predecessor and no successor. The main point that the writer of Hebrews made is that Jesus’ priesthood is superior to that of Levi. This is so because Levi paid tithes to Melchizedek, being in

Abram's loins when Abram paid tithes to Melchizedek (cf. Hebrews 7:9–10). Since Abram was inferior to Melchizedek, then Levi, being the great-great-grandson still in Abram's loins, was inferior to Melchizedek. So the priesthood of Jesus is so much superior to that of the law. According to the writers of Hebrews and Genesis, Jesus and Melchizedek came on the scene a priest and left the scene still a priest. The most important thing is that they are both King and priest. These are the only two times in all the Bible that God had both the King of the nation and the priest of the nation in one single person — in Melchizedek and in Christ. That is the typical nature of Melchizedek in this incident.

A Blood Covenant

In Genesis 15 is found what is perhaps the most important thing that happened in Abram's life. It is important because Abram made a covenant with God:

After this, the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision: “Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield [protector], your very great reward.” But Abram said, “O Sovereign LORD, what can you give me since I remain childless and the one who will inherit my estate is Eliezer of Damascus?” And Abram said, “You have given me no children; so a servant in my household will be my heir” (Genesis 15:1–3).

God had promised him an innumerable seed, but it had been years since that promise. God came and repeated the promise. He said, “I am your shield and your protection,” but Abram said, “If so, where are my children?” The law was that if he had no children, then after he died the steward who had cared for his house all these years would possess all the riches that he had cared for and that he had increased. So

Abram was saying, “How do I know? You made the promise, but now I am still childless. There is no boy in my household.” God’s answer to him is seen in Genesis 15:4: *“Then the word of the LORD came to him: ‘This man will not be your heir, but a son coming from your own body will be your heir.’”*

Where was the proof that God was going to do that? Just the Word of God had been sufficient for Abram in days gone by, but now the test of Abram’s faith was coming. Genesis 15:5 says: *“He took him outside and said, ‘Look up at the heavens and count the stars — if indeed you can count them.’ Then he said to him, ‘So shall your offspring be.’”*

Abram responded in Genesis 15:6: *“Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness.”* God was going to do more than this. He was going to give Abram a sign, but Abram believed without a sign. When God said, “That is the way it is going to be,” Abram said, “I believe that.” This passage is quoted in the New Testament as the kind of faith Christians are to have in order to be justified — the faith that believes because God said it. God is gracious; however, He would not simply leave it there. He was going to make this promise, a covenant, which must be sealed. Covenants must have some token to ratify them. Genesis 15:7–9 says:

He also said to him, “I am the LORD, who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to take possession of it.” But Abram said, “O Sovereign LORD, how can I know that I will gain possession of it? [Abram wanted a sign.] So the LORD said to him, “Bring me a heifer, a goat and a ram, each three years old, along with a dove and a young pigeon.”

They were about to shed blood. No covenant was ever made in the Bible without bloodshed. Genesis 15:10 says, “*Abram brought all these to him ...*” Now Abram could do that. Notice that Abram did what he could do, so God would do what man could not do. So Abram got the heifer, goat, ram, dove, and young pigeon brought them all and:

...cut them in two and arranged the halves opposite each other; the birds, however, he did not cut in half. Then birds of prey came down on the carcasses, but Abram drove them away (Genesis 15:10–11).

Abram was still doing what a man could do. He could gather the sacrifice. He could divide the sacrifice. He could keep the birds of prey away. Genesis 15:12–13 states:

As the sun was setting, Abram fell into a deep sleep, and a thick and dreadful darkness came over him. Then the LORD said to him, “Know for certain [Abraham wanted to know, and now God said, “Know”] that your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own, and they will be enslaved and mistreated four hundred years.”

They were going to be in captivity, enslaved and mistreated for four hundred years. But God said in Genesis 15:14–16:

“But I will punish the nation they serve as slaves, and afterward they will come out with great possessions. You, however, will go to your fathers in peace and be buried at a good old age. In the fourth generation your descendants will come back

here, for the sin of the Amorites has not yet reached its full measure.”

Notice what God said to Abram: “You are going to die at a good old age and in peace. Your seed will go to a strange land, be afflicted and serve them for four hundred years. After that, in the fourth generation, they will come right back here and inherit this land.” Why did they not inherit the land now? Because the iniquity of the Amorites was not yet full. God judges no nation before its time. Genesis 15:17–18 says:

When the sun had set and darkness had fallen, a smoking firepot with a blazing torch appeared and passed between the pieces. On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram and said, “To your descendants...”

Notice that on that day God made a covenant with Abram. This blazing torch was either God or represented God as it passed between the pieces. In that day when two men made a covenant, they would cut an animal in two and they would stand between that animal and join hands after they had cut their hands so that they were bleeding. Their blood was blended together, and they would swear their covenant. They would say, in effect, “If we do not keep this covenant, then what has happened to this animal, let that happen to us.” So they were binding themselves for as long as both of them lived to be in covenant with each other. When two men made a blood covenant, each man’s friends were the other man’s friends, each man’s enemies were the other man’s enemies, and each man’s money was the other’s money, and if one of them were to die then the other would take care of that person. Remember this because this will come back up in the study of a covenant that David made with Jonathan.

But this day God made a covenant with Abram and He said, “Let me be like one of these dead animals if I don’t keep this covenant.” This covenant is sure because it is impossible for God to die:

On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram and said, “To your descendants I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates — the land of the Kenites, Kenizzites, Kadmonites, Hittites, Perizzites, Rephaites, Amorites, Canaanites, Gergashites and Jebusites”
(Genesis 15:18–21).

On the map there is a small river in southern Palestine called the River of Egypt or the Wadi el Arish. These are the tribes who possessed the land at that time, the land that Abram would later to possess.

This was a covenant that God made. God was going to be constantly aware of this covenant. God would keep this covenant. He would keep the covenant even when man did not. God had bound Himself to this covenant. When two men made a blood covenant together, they became more than brothers — they were blood brothers. David made such a covenant with Jonathan, and Paul may have made such a covenant with Timothy because they were father and son in the gospel. When such covenants were made, they were made for as long as that person lived.

This is illustrated with David and Jonathan, an illustration that will be brought up again in the study these two men. David had been just a shepherd boy, but he was skilled in playing the harp. Saul was the king of Israel, and he had a troubled spirit from Jehovah. He was what some might say crazy. Therefore, David would come, play his harp, and sing to him, and that would soothe Saul’s troubled mind. But Saul was so troubled that he was jealous of David,

who went to war and had more victories than Saul did, and he tried to kill him several times over. David managed to escape from Saul each time. Saul had a son named Jonathan, whose soul, the Scripture says, was knit with David's soul. So they made a blood covenant. When people do that, each man cuts his right palm, and then they shake hands. That is where the handshake came from. The handshake was originally a covenant-making thing. When they joined hands, their blood would mingle. David's blood became Jonathan's blood, and Jonathan's blood became David's blood. That is why when Saul fought with David, David did not fight back — because he had a covenant with Jonathan, Saul's son. That is also why, on two occasions, when he could have killed Saul at night, he did not kill him — because Saul was Jonathan's father, and David had a covenant with Jonathan. That was a blood covenant. When Saul and Jonathan were killed on the same day and on the same battlefield and all of their family fled. David sent a war wagon to get Mephibosheth, the crippled son of Jonathan, when he found where he was. Imagine how Mephibosheth would feel, a crippled boy, crutching along with a handmade crutch from some desert tree, when that war wagon rolled into the camp because he thought he was about to be killed. Kings killed the children and the family of the conquered king. But instead of being killed, he was carried back to Jerusalem. He was given two servants to care for him. He was washed, cleaned and clothed. He went and sat at the king's table and he ate the king's food. If someone asked Mephibosheth, "What are you doing here?" he would say, "I don't know." "Aren't you the son of one of the king's enemies?" "Well, I thought I was." "What are you doing here at the table?" He would say, "Ask the king." David would say, if you asked him, "I had a covenant with his father; therefore, I have to take care of him. Down that hallway, you will find a spear,

a shield and a robe. They belonged to his father, and they are the tokens that he and I had a blood covenant."

That was the kind of covenant God had made with Abram. He would take care of Abram's children when they did not deserve to be taken care of. He would take care of Abram's children when they deserved to be destroyed, all because he had a covenant with Abram. God has the same kind of covenant with everyone, who has been baptized into Jesus. When the blood of Jesus has cleansed you, you have such a covenant with God, and He has such a covenant with you. If Christians are faithful to that covenant, then God is faithful to His part of the covenant. He will care for us; He will care for our children; He will care for our eternal destiny if we are faithful to Him. Without the blood of Jesus, there is absolutely no covenant. It takes the blood of Jesus, and He died on the cross. It takes my blood. That is why in Romans 12:1–2 Paul wrote:

Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God — this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is — his good, pleasing and perfect will.

Christians are to offer our bodies as a living sacrifice. Abram could only offer these dead sacrifices, but since that is what he could do, that is what he did. A Christians can only offer his body. All he can give to God is what he is, but when he gives that to God, he has made a blood covenant with Him.

Abram's life would be dependent upon the covenant that God made on this day with him. Abram would keep the

covenant. He would lie and express weakness. He would sin, but he would keep the covenant. The unchanging, sinless God would keep Abram safe in His hand, because he kept the covenant with God. Make a covenant with God. Keep the covenant with God, and He will keep His covenant. He will bless those who keep His covenant. He will curse those who do not have a covenant with Him.

Abraham's Journey (4)

Genesis 16:1–19:38

Review and Introduction

This is fourth lesson in the study of Abraham's journeys. The first nine stations of his journey have been covered. He was born in Ur. He was called to go to Canaan from Haran. Then he went to Shechem and Bethel, the two places where he pitched his tent for a while and worshiped God, but also had to leave because he was unable to find sufficient pasture for his sheep. He traveled to Egypt, where he told the first of two lies about his wife in order to try to preserve his own life so that he could be the seed through whom the promise would come. Abram was driven out of Egypt, although he left much richer than when he went in. He returned to Bethel, where he had trouble with Lot's herdsmen. Trouble came from the East when the kings of Mesopotamia came and carried Lot away to Dan. Abram went to Dan and rescued Lot, and then, returning to the city of Hebron, he came face-to-face with Melchizedek, giving him one-tenth of all that he possessed. He was face-to-face with the king of Sodom, refusing to accept anything from him. Then, in a figurative way, he came face-to-face with God as he and God made a covenant together. Abram carried out his end of the covenant process. He got the sacrifice, cut the sacrifice, arranged the sacrifice, preserved the sacrifice, and then he went to sleep. That was all that Abram could do. In that deep sleep, God made a covenant with Abram that He would be his shield and protector. God promised Abram would be his

representative throughout all the earth, throughout all of time. He promised Abram innumerable seed, as limitless as the stars of the heavens.

Abram and Sarai's Faith Wavers

Sarai's Practical Plan

The years passed, and this part of the study begins with the story of Hagar and Ishmael, which is a story of Abram and Sarai's faith wavering. A person can have faith, and it wavers. Someone can have faith, but it can become smaller, and that is exactly what occurred in Genesis 16:1–2:

Now Sarai, Abram's wife, had borne him no children. But she had an Egyptian maidservant named Hagar; so she said to Abram, "The LORD has kept me from having children. Go, sleep with my maidservant; perhaps I can build a family through her."

That sounds like an immoral thing, but in that part of the world it was a custom. If the wife could not bear children, then someone else bore children for her. The woman who became pregnant by the husband would stay in the wife's tent until the baby was born. The wife would then come out holding the baby after the period of purification, and although everybody knew what had happened, everybody would still say it was her child.

So Abram agreed to what Sarai said. It would be difficult to wait ten years for a promise to be fulfilled and still have no sign that it would happen. That is exactly what was happening to Abram. God had made a promise that Abram would have innumerable offspring, and ten years later he still did not even have a single child. So he decided he was going to help God. However, people always get in

trouble when they try to help God out of His difficulty. What Abram needed to do was wait, but Genesis 16:3 says, “*...Sarai his wife took her Egyptian maidservant Hagar and gave her to her husband to be his wife.*” Read that closely. Sarai gave Hagar to her husband to be his wife, and from that time forward Hagar would be called the wife of Abram. He would have two wives, Sarai and Hagar. After Sarai gave Hagar to Abram, Genesis 16:4–5 states:

He slept with Hagar, and she conceived. When she knew she was pregnant, she began to despise her mistress. Then Sarai said to Abram, “You are responsible for the wrong I am suffering. I put my servant in your arms, and now that she knows she is pregnant, she despises me. May the LORD judge between you and me.”

Abram had trouble in the house. Abram should have waited. Sarai should have waited. Notice Abram’s reply in Genesis 16:6, “*Your servant is in your hands,’ Abram said. ‘Do with her whatever you think best.’ Then Sarai mistreated Hagar; so she fled from her.*”

Hagar’s Encounter with Jehovah

Sarai actually treated Hagar so badly that she drove her away from the camp. But God was watching. Consider what Genesis 16:7 says: “*The angel of the LORD found Hagar...*” Notice that the text does not say this was just any angel; it says this was “*The angel of the LORD...*” This was a particular spiritual being, probably the LORD Himself. But Genesis 16:7 says, “*The angel of the LORD found Hagar near a spring in the desert; it was the spring that is beside the road to Shur.*” This was down in the south, almost out of the promised land.

The angel of the LORD spoke to Hagar as seen in Genesis 16:8–10:

And he said, “Hagar, servant of Sarai, where have you come from, and where are you going?” “I’m running away from my mistress Sarai,” she answered. Then the angel of the LORD told her, “Go back to your mistress and submit to her” The angel added, “I will so increase your descendants that they will be too numerous to count.”

All of the tribes of Arabia, all the Arab people today, come from Hagar and her son, Ishmael. But the servant must always submit to the master even if the master is aggressive and ungodly. Hagar was told to go back and submit herself to Sarai. God made a promise to Hagar:

The angel of the LORD also said to her: “You are now with child and you will have a son. You shall name him Ishmael [That means “God hears”], for the LORD has heard of your misery [Hagar was then told what the boy would be like when he grew up]. He will be a wild donkey of a man; his hand will be against everyone and everyone’s hand against him, and he will live in hostility toward all his brothers (Genesis 16:11–12).

If there has ever been a prophecy fulfilled, it is this one, seeing as how the Arabian tribes throughout all of time have fought against one another. There has been constant hostility in that part of the world.

Hagar, recognizing what had just happened and who had been speaking to her, named the place where this took place:

She gave this name to the LORD who spoke to her: “You are the God who sees me,” for she said, “I have now seen the One who sees me.” That is why the well was called Beer Lahai Roi [The name of the place is “Lahai Roi” which is translated from the Hebrew, “Well of the Living One who sees me”] ; it is still there, between Kadesh and Bered (Genesis 16:13–14).

Hagar had been driven all the way out of Abram’s land by the anger and ill will of her mistress Sarai, but now God sent her back. Genesis 16:15–16 says:

So Hagar bore Abram a son [Notice that she “bore Abram a son”], and Abram gave the name Ishmael to the son she had borne. Abram was eighty-six years old when Hagar bore him Ishmael.

Eleven years after he entered the promised land, he finally had a son. Sarah and Abram wanted the seed line of Genesis 3:15 to be traced through Ishmael because they did not believe they could have a child. Their faith in God was still there, but it was not as firm as it had been.

The Covenant Promise

The Establishment of the Covenant

In Genesis 17 God made a second covenant with Abram. This covenant was a sign and a token of the covenant of Genesis 15. After Abraham was dead, his children would come back to this very land that he was in; they would possess the land, rule the land and become a great nation in the land. God had given a sign by burning up the sacrifice that Abram had arranged to God. Now God was going to

give a continual covenant that would confirm the covenant of Genesis 15. It is called the covenant of circumcision.

The Covenant Extended

Genesis 17:1–2 says:

*When Abram was ninety-nine years old [This means that there is a thirteen-year time difference between Genesis 16:16 and 17:1], the LORD appeared to him and said, “I am God Almighty [from the Hebrew *El Shaddai*, which is translated “God, the Breasted One, the Nourisher, the Feeder”]; walk before me and be blameless. I will confirm my covenant between me and you and will greatly increase your numbers.”*

God was telling Abram that He had come to tell him that there was something that Abram must do and that there was something that God would do. He was telling Abram to walk before Him. If Abram would just do that then he would be blameless, his sins would be forgiven, and God would confirm the covenant.

Abram's response to this encounter with God is seen in Genesis 17:3–4: *“Abram fell facedown, and God said to him, ‘As for me, this is my covenant with you: You will be the father of many nations.’”* Abram would be the father of not just one great nation (singular), but many nations (plural). Israel, the Arabs, and when he later married Keturah after Sarai died, many other nations would come from Abram's loins. Genesis 17:5 says: *“‘No longer will you be called Abram; your name will be Abraham, for I have made you a father of many nations’”* (Genesis 17:5). The name of the LORD is Jehovah or Yahweh (it has a rough-breathing H sound), and part of God's name was put in Abraham's name. He became Abra-Ham. God put His very sacred name in the

middle of Abram's name so that he was not only the "exalted father of many nations," he was now the one who was exalted by the name of God. Any time anyone said, "Abraham," they were pronouncing God's name and saying that he was the man of God.

In Genesis 17:6–7 God made another promise to Abraham:

"I will make you very fruitful; I will make nations of you, and kings will come from you. I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you."

Paul stated the following in the Book of Galatians:

You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise (Galatians 3:26–29).

Because Christians have been baptized we have put on Christ. We are not only now saved, but Paul said, we are Abraham's children. We are heirs according to the promise. God is still keeping His covenant, not with the physical seed of Abraham, but with the spiritual seed of Abraham.

Genesis 17:8 says, "*The whole land of Canaan, where you are now an alien, I will give as an everlasting possession to you and your descendants after you; and I will be their God.*" Abraham did not possess any of this land when he died except a cave for a burial place. All of this

land would be his according to God's promise in days to come, but God now gave the sign of this covenant in Genesis 17:9–11:

Then God said to Abraham, “As for you, you must keep my covenant, you and your descendants after you for the generations to come. This is my covenant with you and your descendants after you, the covenant you are to keep: Every male among you shall be circumcised. You are to undergo circumcision, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and you.”

This was not the first time anybody was circumcised, but it was the first time that circumcision had become a covenant. The covenant was that Abraham was to walk with God, and He would walk with Abraham.

Circumcision was the sign of that covenant. Genesis 17:12–14 says:

“For the generations to come every male among you who is eight days old must be circumcised, including those born in your household or bought with money from a foreigner—those who are not your offspring. Whether born in your household or bought with your money, they must be circumcised. My covenant in your flesh is to be an everlasting covenant. Any uncircumcised male, who has not been circumcised in the flesh, will be cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant.”

Circumcision was an outward sign of this covenant that God and Abraham had in heart and spirit.

Then God spoke to Sarai, and Isaac was promised. Ishmael would not be the son through whom the seed was to

be traced. Genesis 17:15 says, “*God also said to Abraham, ‘As for Sarai your wife, you are no longer to call her Sarai; her name will be Sarah.’*” Notice that God’s sacred name was put into Sarah’s name also. Sarai means “princess,” but Sarah means “God’s princess.” She became God’s princess on this occasion.

God made the following promise to Sarah:

“I will bless her and will surely give you a son by her. I will bless her so that she will be the mother of nations; kings of peoples will come from her.” Abraham fell facedown; he laughed and said to himself, “Will a son be born to a man a hundred years old? Will Sarah bear a child at the age of ninety?” And Abraham said to God, “If only Ishmael might live under your blessing!” (Genesis 17:16–18).

Sarah was a barren woman. She had never been able to bear any children. Abraham was 99 years old when this was said, and Sarah was 89 years old. If she had ever had the ability to have children, and yet did not, it should be obvious that she was not going to start now. It would take a double miracle for this promise to be fulfilled. She would have to be made fertile.

Abraham believed that what the LORD was saying was too hard. It was impossible. Abraham’s faith wavered a bit again. He did not believe God this time simply because God said it. He laughed in unbelief, and he said “Oh, that Ishmael might live before you.” In Genesis 17:19 it says, “*Then God said, ‘Yes, but your wife Sarah will bear you a son, and you will call him Isaac ...’*” In the Hebrew language Isaac means “laughter.” Every time they called Isaac to dinner or spoke his name, they would be saying “laughter,” and Abraham

would remember that he had laughed in unbelief when he heard that Isaac would be born.

God was going to bless Ishmael because He had heard his cry at Beer Lahai Roi. God also said in Genesis 17:20:

“And as for Ishmael, I have heard you: I will surely bless him; I will make him fruitful and will greatly increase his numbers. He will be the father of twelve rulers, and I will make him into a great nation.”

The seed covenant was still going to be established through Isaac, as God reminded Abraham in Genesis 17:21–22:

*“But my covenant I will establish with Isaac, whom Sarah will bear to you by this time next year.”
When he had finished speaking with Abraham, God went up from him.*

Ishmael had been promised a blessing, but a son named Isaac had been promised to Abraham, and the covenant would be through him.

In Genesis 17:23–27 Abraham obeyed God:

On that very day Abraham took his son Ishmael and all those born in his household or bought with his money, every male in his household, and circumcised them, as God told him. Abraham was ninety-nine years old when he was circumcised, and his son Ishmael was thirteen; Abraham and his son Ishmael were both circumcised on that same day. And every male in Abraham’s household, including those born in his household or bought from a foreigner, was circumcised with him.

Abraham's household now had the sign of the covenant that God had made with Abraham.

The Interceding Patriarch

Abraham, the Gracious Host

Genesis 18–19 records the great incident of Sodom and Gomorrah. When the words Sodom and Gomorrah are mentioned, the picture of sinfulness and judgment by fire comes to the forefront. All of the events in these two chapters occurred before Isaac was born.

The LORD appeared to Abraham near the great trees of Mamre while he was sitting at the entrance to his tent in the heat of the day. Abraham looked up and saw three men standing nearby. When he saw them, he hurried from the entrance of his tent to meet them and bowed low to the ground. He said, “If I have found favor in your eyes, my lord, do not pass your servant by. Let a little water be brought, and then you may all wash your feet and rest under this tree. Let me get you something to eat, so you can be refreshed and then go on your way — now that you have come to your servant.” “Very well,” they answered, “do as you say” (Genesis 18:1–5).

Abraham did not know that he was talking to two angels of the LORD. He thought he was talking to three ordinary men. The writer of Hebrews said, “*Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it*” (Hebrews 13:2). Abraham moved quickly:

So Abraham hurried into the tent to Sarah. “Quick,” he said, “get three seahs of fine flour and

knead it and bake some bread." Then he ran to the herd and selected a choice, tender calf and gave it to a servant, who hurried to prepare it. He then brought some curds and milk and the calf that had been prepared, and set these before them. While they ate, he stood near them under a tree (Genesis 18:6–8).

Sarah's Laughter

One of the angels said to Abraham: “‘Where is your wife Sarah?’ they asked him. ‘There, in the tent,’ he said” (Genesis 18:9). Abraham could very well have been wondering just how it was that they knew that her name was Sarah.

Then the LORD said, “I will surely return to you about this time next year, and Sarah your wife will have a son.” Now Sarah was listening at the entrance to the tent, which was behind him. Abraham and Sarah were already old and well advanced in years, and Sarah was past the age of childbearing. So Sarah laughed to herself as she thought, “After I am worn out and my master is old, will I now have this pleasure?” Then the LORD said to Abraham, “Why did Sarah laugh and say, ‘Will I really have a child, now that I am old?’” (Genesis 18:10–13).

God then asked an important question: “‘Is anything too hard for the LORD?’” The answer, of course, is “No!” God continues, “‘I will return to you at the appointed time next year and Sarah will have a son.’ Sarah was afraid, so she lied and said, ‘I did not laugh.’ But he said, ‘Yes, you did laugh’” (Genesis 18:14–15).

Abraham, the Intercessor

When the men got up to leave, they looked down toward Sodom, and Abraham walked along with them to see them on their way. Then the LORD said, “Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do? Abraham will surely become a great and powerful nation, and all nations on earth will be blessed through him. For I have chosen him, so that he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing what is right and just, so that the LORD will bring about for Abraham what he has promised him.” Then the LORD said, “The outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is so great and their sin so grievous that I will go down and see if what they have done is as bad as the outcry that has reached me. If not, I will know.” The men turned away and went toward Sodom, but Abraham remained standing before the LORD. Then Abraham approached him and said: “Will you sweep away the righteous with the wicked? What if there are fifty righteous people in the city? Will you really sweep it away and not spare the place for the sake of the fifty righteous people in it? Far be it from you to do such a thing — to kill the righteous with the wicked, treating the righteous and the wicked alike. Far be it from you! Will not the Judge of all the earth do right?” ... “Now that I have been so bold as to speak to the Lord, what if only twenty can be found there?” He said, “For the sake of twenty, I will not destroy it.” Then he said, “May the Lord not be angry, but let me speak just once more. What if only ten can be found there?” He answered, “For the sake of ten, I will not destroy it.” When the LORD had finished speaking with Abraham, he left, and Abraham returned home (Genesis 18:16–25, 31–33).

Lot's Last Days

Genesis 19 tells of the doom that fell upon Sodom and Gomorrah. Genesis 19:1 says:

The two angels arrived at Sodom in the evening, and Lot was sitting in the gateway of the city. When he saw them, he got up to meet them and bowed down with his face to the ground.

Next it says that Lot asked them to come to his house. They accepted his invitation and went into his house. The text then says that the men of Sodom wanted to have sexual relations with Lot's guests. They were what are sometimes called Sodomites. They were homosexuals, but Lot, instead of handing over his guests to these men, wanted to send out his daughters. Instead, the two angels reached out their hand and blinded all these men, and they staggered away. The angels then told Lot to get out of the city. Rather than moving quickly, Lot lingered. Finally, the angels took Lot, his wife and his two daughters and practically dragged them out of the city, telling them not to look back. Lot's wife disobeyed that command. She looked back at the city that she was leaving because she was leaving the things that she desired and the things she loved. For her actions she was turned into a pillar of salt.

One night Lot's two daughters began to think that if their father were to die and they were in this wilderness, he would have no seed. Their family line would end. So they got their father drunk, and beginning with the oldest daughter, they went in and slept with him. They both became pregnant and bore sons named Moab (who became the father of the Moabites) and Ben-ammi (who became the father of the Ammonites). When Israel finally entered the promised land, these two nations, the nation of Ammon and the nation of Moab, gave them the most trouble, along with the sons of

Ishmael and the other sons of Abraham by his other wives. Israel would be mostly troubled by their kinsman.

Abraham still did not have the promised seed. He wished that Ishmael would be the promised seed, but God would not allow it. Isaac was the promised seed. Lot's time in and departure from Sodom and Gomorrah show the result of living, dealing and mingling with wicked people. Abraham had the blessing of being separated from that wicked city and dwelling in mountainous country. But Abraham still had no seed. Would God be faithful to His promise? God had said that He would return in one year and that Sarah would have a son. One year and the covenant that He made with Abraham would then be made with his children. God is faithful with His promises.

Abraham's Journey (5)

Genesis 20:1–22:19

Review and Introduction

This is the mid-point in the study of the life of Abraham. Here is a quick review of the nine stations of Abraham's life. There will eventually be sixteen stations in his life, but the busiest time of Abraham's life was the ninth station.

The first station was Ur, and the thing to remember is that this is where Abram was born. Here is where he reached maturity. The second station was Haran, and the thing to remember here is that Terah, Abram's father, died and that Abram was called a second time to go into the promised land, into Palestine, or Canaan as it is also called. The third station was Shechem. This was his first stop in the promised land, between Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim. Here he pitched his tent, fed his sheep, and built an altar to God. When the pasture ran out, he traveled to Bethel. Bethel is a very important city throughout all of this Bible study. One of the golden calves of Israel's idolatry would be erected there later. But it was here that Abram again pitched his tent, built an altar, and fed his sheep. When the pasture ran out, he passed through the south land (the Negev) and traveled on into Egypt. There was always grain in Egypt, so Abram was able to feed his sheep; but it was here that he also told the lie that Sarai was his sister and not his wife. Based on that lie, Pharaoh took Sarah to be his wife, and God cursed him. Pharaoh drove Abram and Sarai out of the land, but he sent

Abram away with great possessions and Sarai with a handmaid named Hagar.

They returned to the promised land and dwelt for a time at Bethel. Trouble arose between Lot's and Abram's herdsmen. Based on an agreement between the two men, Lot took the good land, and Abram took the mountain country and lived in Hebron. Trouble came from the east in the form of five Mesopotamian kings. Lot, who was living in Sodom and Gomorrah, was carried captive all the way to Dan in the northernmost part of the land near the waters of Merom. This was the eighth station. Abram went to Dan to deliver Lot; he rescued him and, in the process, brought all of Sodom's people and all of Lot's possessions back to the southern part of the promised land, toward Hebron. This was the ninth station where nine things happened, the last two of which were the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah and the birth of Lot's two sons through his daughters. The incestuous relationship that he had in his drunken state resulted in the countries of Ammon and Moab. That is an important thing because later on in Israel's history, when God sent them into promised land, He really did not want them to fight Moab or Ammon because they were brothers.

Abraham in the Negev

Gerar — Abraham Lies to Abimelech

The tenth chapter of this study begins in Genesis 20. This might be called the “lying chapter.” It is about Abraham lying again, but it is also about the birth of Isaac. Genesis 20:1 says: *“Now Abraham moved on from there into the region of the Negev [that is, the south land] and lived between Kadesh and Shur. For a while he stayed in Gerar.”*

Abraham was looking for pasture land. A man who had 318 grown slaves in his own house as a standing militia would have thousands of people in the household. He

probably owned tens of thousands of sheep. They took a lot of pasture land, and the mountainous country where he lived did not have that much grain. So he found pasture on the coast of the Mediterranean in Gerar.

“And there Abraham said of his wife Sarah, ‘She is my sister’...” (Genesis 20:2). This is the same lie Abraham spoke to Pharaoh. One might think Abraham would not repeat that mistake. Jesus recognized that people would make mistakes over and over, did He not? Peter asked Jesus, “How many times shall I forgive my brother if he sins against me, seven times?” Jesus said, “Not seven times but seventy times seven” (cf. Matthew 18:21–22). So even though Abraham acknowledged that he was wrong the first time he lied about Sarah, he repeated the sin.

“...Then Abimelech king of Gerar sent for Sarah and took her” (Genesis 20:2). Remember this lady was close to ninety years of age. Sarah must have been one attractive lady, and perhaps Abimelech was an older king. *“But God came to Abimelech in a dream one night and said to him, ‘You are as good as dead because of the woman you have taken; she is a married woman”* (Genesis 20:3). God was being gracious to Abimelech in letting him know that he was about to commit a grievous sin. The sin was not in getting another wife, the sin was getting another man’s wife. She was a married woman. Genesis 20:4–5 says:

Now Abimelech had not gone near her, so he said, “Lord, will you destroy an innocent nation? Did he not say to me, ‘She is my sister,’ and didn’t she also say, ‘He is my brother?’ I have done this with a clear conscience and clean hands.”

He said, “I am innocent. I did not know that the woman was married.” *“Then God said to him in the dream, ‘Yes, I know you did this with a clear conscience, and so I have kept you*

from sinning against me. That is why I did not let you touch her" (Genesis 20:6). God spoke to him before he sinned, and in Genesis 20:7 God instructed Abimelech on what to do: "*Now return the man's wife, for he is a prophet, and he will pray for you and you will live. But if you do not return her, you may be sure that you and all yours will die.*" That is interesting. Abraham was the one who lied, yet God said, "This is my man." He lied, but he was still God's man. He was a prophet, and God would hear his prayer. Abraham was weak, not unbelieving. Abimelech believed what God had said, so "*Early the next morning Abimelech summoned all his officials, and when he told them all that had happened, they were very much afraid*" (Genesis 20:8).

After speaking with his servants, Abimelech dealt with Abraham:

Then Abimelech called Abraham in and said, "What have you done to us? How have I wronged you that you have brought such great guilt upon me and my kingdom? You have done things to me that should not be done." And Abimelech asked Abraham, "What was your reason for doing this?" (Genesis 20:9–10).

Abraham replied in a way that showed that he still did not have his full trust in God: "*Abraham replied, 'I said to myself, "There is surely no fear of God in this place, and they will kill me because of my wife"*" (Genesis 20:11). He was afraid. Sarah was an attractive woman even though she was an older lady, and Abraham was afraid that some of Abimelech's people would kill him and take her.

Then Abraham tried to justify himself: "*Besides, she really is my sister, the daughter of my father though not of my mother; and she became my wife*" (Genesis 20:12). He said, "I told you the truth; she is my sister." But he intended

to deceive. And with the intent to deceive, the truth becomes a lie. If a person says something that is wrong out of ignorance, he is wrong. In that case, it is not a lie. But anything told with the intent to deceive is a lie. Abraham intended to deceive. Notice Genesis 20:13:

"And when God had me wander from my father's household, I said to her, 'This is how you can show your love to me: Everywhere we go, say of me, "He is my brother."'"

So they told this lie on two occasions. Abraham was using Sarah to protect himself and was seemingly not that concerned about what happened to her. This is not pointed out to make light of Abraham. It is just that people should not make too much of Abraham. He was a man like any other, subject to the same foibles, the same temptations and the same weaknesses. His strength was that he always came back to God. He always repented of the evil that he had done.

Abimelech responded in Genesis 20:14–15:

Then Abimelech brought sheep and cattle and male and female slaves and gave them to Abraham, and he returned Sarah his wife to him. And Abimelech said, "My land is before you; live wherever you like."

Abraham was being blessed by God even when he was doing wrong. Again this is not to make light of Abraham. It is to show God's greatness. He promised Abraham blessings, and He fulfilled His covenant even when it appeared that Abraham was not. Abraham even got to choose the place where he would live.

Now Sarah had been wronged, so some token must be paid to her, ransom paid for the wrong done to her. Genesis 20:16 says:

To Sarah he said, “I am giving your brother a thousand shekels of silver [approximately 25 pounds of silver]. This is to cover the offense against you before all who are with you; you are completely vindicated.”

God paid Abraham the bride price that Abimelech would have had to pay to Abraham had Sarah really been his sister. To cover any shame or any dishonor that he might have brought upon Sarah, Abimelech was willing to pay the price. Abimelech had given Abraham all kinds of riches. He had given the thousand shekels of silver to him, returned Sarah, and announced to all the people that this woman was to be honored.

Then Abraham prayed to God:

Then Abraham prayed to God, and God healed Abimelech, his wife and his slave girls so they could have children again, for the LORD had closed up every womb in Abimelech’s household because of Abraham’s wife Sarah (Genesis 20:17–18).

The women in Abimelech’s house would have no children until Sarah was back with Abraham. When Bible students read this part of Abraham’s life, we may be a little disappointed that he told the lie again. However, we can always be comforted to know that even the friend of God, even the heroes of our Bible, are men who are subject to the same temptations, troubles and trials that we are. We should not be grateful that Abraham lied, but we should be grateful

that it is recorded that he came back to God and honored Him.

The Birth of the Promised Heir

Genesis 21 records the second event that occurred at Gerar. This event was the birth of Isaac who was the promised child of the year before:

Now the LORD was gracious to Sarah as he had said, and the LORD did for Sarah what he had promised. Sarah became pregnant and bore a son to Abraham in his old age, at the very time God had promised him. Abraham gave the name Isaac [which translated means “laughter” or “to laugh”] to the son Sarah bore him. When his son Isaac was eight days old, Abraham circumcised him, as God commanded him. Abraham was a hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him (Genesis 21:1–5).

That seems amazing, but remember that Abraham was born when his father, Terah, was 130 years old. Abraham would have six sons after Isaac by his second wife, Keturah, and many sons after this one by the concubines that he would take. So the problem was not Abraham’s age or virility. The problem had been Sarah’s barrenness. Her barrenness was intended on purpose by God so that the credit and the glory could be given to Him in the birth of Isaac.

Sarah’s response is recorded in Genesis 21:6–7:

Sarah said, “God has brought me laughter [Isaac], and everyone who hears about this will laugh with me.” And she added, “Who would have said to

Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? Yet I have borne him a son in his old age.”

Notice that one child was called children. She had borne Abraham children.

The Expulsion of the Bondwoman and Her Son

Ishmael did not like the fact that Isaac was now in the family. He was jealous, so he rebelled and balked. Therefore he and his mother had to leave Abraham's house. Genesis 21:8 says, “*The child grew and was weaned, and on the day Isaac was weaned Abraham held a great feast.*” This would probably make Isaac three or four years old. “*But Sarah saw that the son whom Hagar the Egyptian had borne to Abraham was mocking*” (Genesis 21:9). He was not just playful. He was mocking Isaac and saying, “You think you're going to be the heir? Well, I am the number one son.” Genesis 21:10–14 continues:

And she said to Abraham, “Get rid of that slave woman and her son, for that slave woman’s son will never share in the inheritance with my son Isaac.”

[Sarah was wanting the competition to Isaac removed.] *The matter distressed Abraham greatly because it concerned his son. But God said to him, “Do not be so distressed about the boy and your maidservant. Listen to whatever Sarah tells you, because it is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned. I will make the son of the maidservant into a nation also, because he is your offspring.” Early the next morning Abraham took some food and a skin of water and gave them to Hagar. He set them on her shoulders and then sent her off with the boy...*

Ishmael was thirteen or fourteen years old when Isaac was born. He was now sixteen or seventeen years old. He was not a little baby anymore; he was a teenager. Even at that age, watch what happened in Genesis 21:14–21:

...She went on her way and wandered in the desert of Beersheba. [They were now out of the promised land.] When the water in the skin was gone, she put the boy under one of the bushes. Then she went off and sat down nearby, about a bowshot away, for she thought, “I cannot watch the boy die.” And as she sat there nearby, she began to sob. God heard the boy crying, and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven and said to her, “What is the matter, Hagar? Do not be afraid; God has heard the boy crying as he lies there. Lift the boy up and take him by the hand, for I will make him into a great nation.” Then God opened her eyes and she saw a well of water. So she went and filled the skin with water and gave the boy a drink. God was with the boy as he grew up. He lived in the desert and became an archer. While he was living in the Desert of Paran, his mother got a wife for him from Egypt.

This was the disinheritance of Ishmael. Ishmael would not inherit with Isaac, but there was a strange thing about all of this. He must have still loved Abraham because when Abraham died not only would Isaac bury him but Ishmael would come back as well. Ishmael and Isaac, Abraham's two sons, would bury him. None of the sons of Keturah would be back. None of the sons of the concubines would be back, but this firstborn son of Abraham along with Isaac would. Not the firstborn through whom the seed would come, but the first child Abraham bore would be back to bury his father.

Isaac now had no rival to the inheritance of Abraham. Isaac would be the one through whom the seed of Abraham would be traced. Isaac would be the one through whom the seed of the woman, who would crush the devil's head, would be born.

Beersheba — Abraham Makes a Covenant with Abimelech

A problem still existed between Abraham and Abimelech. Abraham had sinned grievously against Abimelech, but Abimelech told Abraham that since he was a prophet of God, he could go anywhere he wanted to in the land and live there. Because of this agreement Abraham and Abimelech made a treaty. They made a covenant. This covenant is found in Genesis 21:22–34. It needs to be paid attention to because it talks about the integrity of the Amorites and why Abraham's seed could not have this land at this particular time. The Amorites were still a righteous people:

At that time, Abimelech and Phicol the commander of his forces said to Abraham, “God is with you in everything you do. Now swear to me here before God that you will not deal falsely with me or my children or my descendants. Show to me and the country where you are living as an alien the same kindness that I have shown to you.” Abraham said, “I swear it” (Genesis 21:22–24).

Abraham swore that he would do as Abimelech asked. But then Abraham's and Abimelech's people began complaining about a well of water that Abimelech's servants had seized. Abimelech said that he did not know anything about that, but he put a stop to the arguing. In order to solidify the covenant, Abraham brought Abimelech seven

ewe lambs. These were not seven ordinary lambs, but seven lambs that could increase his flock. They both offered a sacrifice, pouring blood around the base of the well. From that time on, they called the well Beersheba, which means “the well of the oath.” It was the southern most city in the promised land. Before Abraham or Abimelech entered into God’s land, there was a well there to remind them both that they were in blood covenant together. They were not going to harm each other.

Moriah — Offering of Isaac: A Test of Abraham’s Faith

The Divine Command

In Genesis 22 is found the last station in this chapter, which is Moriah. The event that occurred here was the offering of Isaac:

Some time later God tested Abraham. He said to him, “Abraham!” “Here I am,” he replied. Then God said, “Take your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love, and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains I will tell you about” (Genesis 22:1–2).

The Journey

This was not Mount Moriah in the city of Jerusalem; it was a mountain in the land of Moriah. The land of Moriah was just west of the Sea of Galilee, toward the south, and it was probably the Hill of Mora, the highest mountain in that little range, on which Abraham was going to offer Isaac. Following God’s directive:

Early the next morning Abraham got up and saddled his donkey. He took with him two of his

servants and his son Isaac. When he had cut enough wood for the burnt offering, he set out for the place God had told him about. On the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place in the distance. He said to his servants, “Stay here with the donkey while I and the boy go over there. We will worship and then we will come back to you.” Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and placed it on his son Isaac, and he himself carried the fire and the knife. As the two of them went on together, Isaac spoke up and said to his father Abraham, “Father?” “Yes, my son?” Abraham replied. “The fire and wood are here,” Isaac said, “but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?” Abraham answered, “God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son.” And the two of them went on together. When they reached the place God had told him about, Abraham built an altar there and arranged the wood on it. He bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood (Genesis 22:3–9).

The Sacrifice of Isaac Averted

Isaac was a young man. He was not a little boy. He could have resisted this, but he did not: *“Then he reached out his hand and took the knife to slay his son”* (Genesis 22:10). As far as Abraham was concerned, he had sacrificed Isaac. The knife was in his hand, and he was about to cut Isaac’s throat, but God intervened:

But the angel of the LORD called out to him from heaven, “Abraham! Abraham!” [That was the best news Abraham ever heard, and he was quick to answer.] “Here I am,” he replied. “Do not lay a hand on the boy,” he said. “Do not do anything to

him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son”
(Genesis 22:11–12).

When God said, “*Now I know ...*” it does not mean that God did not know up until that time because both in the Hebrew and the Septuagint it uses a word that means, “I know for sure.” It indicated to God that Abraham would hold nothing back from Him.

God then supplied the sacrifice for Abraham to make. Genesis 22:13 says, “*Abraham looked up and there in a thicket he saw a ram caught by its horns ...*” That was not luck. Before the foundation of the world, God knew that would happen. Abraham had told Isaac that God would provide the sacrifice, and now God had provided the sacrifice. Abraham knew what to do:

...He went over and took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering instead of his son. So Abraham called that place The LORD Will Provide [Jehovah-jireh]. And to this day it is said, “On the mountain of the LORD it will be provided” (Genesis 22:13–14).

The Covenant Promise Confirmed

Abraham had offered a living sacrifice — his son, Isaac. God accepted the ram as a substitute, but Abraham had offered a living sacrifice. I have offered a living sacrifice. You have offered a living sacrifice. That sacrifice is our own body, and that is because God has provided the sacrifice of the ram on the cross. Now God would renew His covenant:

The angel of the LORD called to Abraham from heaven a second time and said, “I swear by myself, declares the LORD, that because you have done this

and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies, and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me” (Genesis 22:15–18).

The writer of Hebrews referred to this and said, “*When God made his promise to Abraham, since there was no one greater for him to swear by, he swore by himself*” (Hebrews 6:13). People always swear by somebody greater than themselves. There is nobody greater than God. So He has to swear by whom? Himself! He said, “*I swear by myself.*”

There is just one argument with the New International Version translation of Genesis 22:17–18. At the end of Genesis 22:17 the Hebrew language is singular. It says “*your descendant*” will take possession of the cities of their enemies. He was not talking about seed, plural, in Genesis 22:17–18. He was talking about “*seed*,” singular. The King James Version of Genesis 22:17–18 says: “...*I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies ...*” That was the seed of the woman who would crush the devil’s head and bless all mankind and through whom all the nations of the earth would be blessed. So God repeated the seed promise of Genesis 3:15 through Isaac. Genesis 22:19 says, “*Then Abraham returned to his servants, and they set off together for Beersheba. And Abraham stayed in Beersheba.*”

Abraham had passed the test — not just an examination, but the test. He had indicated by offering of Isaac that he would withhold absolutely nothing from God. He had renounced all that he had, and said that it belonged to God and declared himself a steward not just of the sheep, not just

of the slaves, not just of the cattle, but of his only son, Isaac. Christians must declare that all that we are and all that we have belong to God, and then the LORD will provide for us.

Abraham's Journey (6)

Genesis 22:19–25:18

Review and Introduction

The last chapter covered the twelfth station of Abraham's journey. Consider this quick review of those stations and remember what happened in each place:

- The first station was **Ur**, where Abram was born.
- The second station was **Haran**, where Abram went with his father, mother, Lot and Sarai, his wife. This was where Terah died, and Abram received his second call from God.
- The third station was **Shechem**, where Abram fed his sheep, pitched his tent, and built an altar to worship God.
- The fourth station was **Bethel**, where Abram made an altar to God, pitched his tent, fed his sheep, but he also ran out of pasture.
- The fifth station was **Egypt**, where there was always grain. That was where Abram told the first of two lies about Sarai not being his wife. Abram was expelled from the country for lying, but was given great riches as he left.
- The sixth station was back at **Bethel**, where there was trouble between his servants and Lot's servants as to which of their masters was the greatest. Abram gave Lot the choice of the land, and Lot chose the well-watered pasture land.

- The seventh station was **Hebron**, where Abram was left with mountainous country, but there was also the best of the grain in the land.
- The eighth station was **Dan**, where Abram went because the kings of the east had come and conquered Sodom and Gomorrah. Because Lot lived in Sodom, the kings carried Lot, his family, and his goods captive back to Mesopotamia. Abram gathered his 318 men, pursued them to Dan, defeated them, and brought Lot and his things back toward the south to Sodom.
- The ninth station was **Hebron**, where on the way back Abram met Melchizedek, and God made a covenant with him. A lot of great things happened at Hebron, but the primary thing to remember is the covenant.
- The tenth station was **Gerar**, where Abraham lied again, this time to Abimelech, the king of the Canaanites. He was again cast out of the land but was made rich by Abimelech. Abimelech was afraid of him because he was a servant of God. This is where Isaac was born.
- The eleventh station was **Beersheba**, where a covenant was made with between Abraham and Abimelech that they would help one another and would not fight or deceive one another.
- The twelfth station was **Mount Moriah**, where Abraham offered his son, Isaac. He did not have to kill Isaac, but he did offer him. The knife was in his hand and was poised at his son's throat. God called to him and pointed him to a ram that was then offered instead of Isaac.

The Last Days of Abraham

Beersheba and Nahor's Children

The thirteenth station was Beersheba, where Abraham had been living at the time when he went to offer Isaac on Mount Moriah. They returned to Beersheba. Genesis 22:19–24 says:

Then Abraham returned to his servants, and they set off together for Beersheba. And Abraham stayed in Beersheba. Some time later Abraham was told, “Milcah is also a mother...she has borne sons to your brother Nahor...Bethuel.” Bethuel became the father of Rebekah...

Abraham learned of Nahor having children, one of whom was a son, Bethuel, who became the father of a woman named Rebekah. That is important because she would become the wife of Isaac.

Hebron, Where Sarah Died and Was Buried

From Beersheba Abraham went to Hebron, the fourteenth station, which is where Sarah died:

Sarah lived to be a hundred and twenty-seven years old. She died at Kiriath Arba (that is, Hebron) in the land of Canaan, and Abraham went to mourn for Sarah and to weep over her (Genesis 23:1–2).

This means that Sarah died when Isaac was 37 years old. It is not known why Sarah was in Hebron and Abraham was in Beersheba. It could be that since Sarah was now old and could not travel with Abraham as he hunted for pasture land for his sheep. Whatever the reason might be, after Abraham had mourned and wept for Sarah, he purchased a burial site. This is one of the most interesting examples of Oriental bargaining to be found in any literature:

Then Abraham rose from beside his dead wife and spoke to the Hittites. He said, “I am an alien and a stranger among you. Sell me some property for a burial site here so I can bury my dead.” The Hittites replied to Abraham, “Sir, listen to us. You

are a mighty prince among us. Bury your dead in the choicest of our tombs. None of us will refuse you his tomb for burying your dead.” Then Abraham rose and bowed down before the people of the land, the Hittites. He said to them, “If you are willing to let me bury my dead, then listen to me and intercede with Ephron son of Zohar on my behalf so he will sell me the cave of Machpelah, which belongs to him and is at the end of his field. Ask him to sell it to me for the full price as a burial site among you” (Genesis 23:3–9).

Abraham was too full of sorrow and mourning for Sarah to want to bargain. So he said he would buy the field and cave for the full price. But for Ephron to just name a price and to take it would be to lose face before the people, for this was a mighty prince. Ephron replied:

Ephron the Hittite was sitting among his people and he replied to Abraham in the hearing of all the Hittites who had come to the gate of his city. “No, my lord,” he said. “Listen to me; I give you the field, and I give you the cave that is in it. I give it to you in the presence of my people. Bury your dead” (Genesis 23:10–11).

Ephron said he would simply give the property to Abraham, but if Abraham took that offer, then he would lose face. Ephron did not really want to just give the land away; it was just an honorable, pleasant way to reply to a person he counted as superior to himself.

The negotiation continued in Genesis 23:12–13:

Again Abraham bowed down before the people of the land and he said to Ephron in their hearing,

"Listen to me, if you will. I will pay the price of the field. Accept it from me so I can bury my dead there."

Abraham wanted no part of the gift offer; he wanted to pay for this property. However, notice Ephron's reply as he very tactfully named the price: "*Ephron answered Abraham, 'Listen to me, my lord; the land is worth four hundred shekels of silver [ten pounds of silver], but what is that between me and you? Bury your dead.'*"

It sounds as though Ephron was saying again that he did not want any money for such a small amount of land. The amount was such a small amount of silver. What was that between two princes like Abraham and Ephron? Abraham should go ahead and take the land. However, that was not what Ephron was saying. He was naming the price that Abraham wanted named. Genesis 23:16–20 says:

Abraham agreed to Ephron's terms and weighed out for him the price he had named in the hearing of the Hittites: four hundred shekels of silver, according to the weight current among the merchants. So Ephron's field in Machpelah near Mamre — both the field and the cave in it, and all the trees within the borders of the field — was deeded to Abraham as his property in the presence of all the Hittites who had come to the gate of the city. Afterward Abraham buried his wife Sarah in the cave in the field of Machpelah near Mamre (which is at Hebron) in the land of Canaan. So the field and the cave in it were deeded to Abraham by the Hittites as a burial site.

Both men came out of the negotiation having saved face. Nobody was embarrassed, nobody lost any honor, and Abraham had purchased Ephron's field at full price.

This was a wonderful scene of honorable and sensible bargaining. Sarah was then buried in Hebron. Later, Abraham would be buried there; Rebekah, Isaac's wife, would be buried there; Isaac would be buried there; Leah, the legitimate and first wife of Jacob, would be buried there, and Jacob would be buried there. This cave would contain Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and their legitimate wives. Abraham had purchased a family burial cave.

Obtaining a Wife for Isaac

Beersheba — Rebekah and Keturah

Abraham now recognized that Isaac needed a wife. Isaac was a grown man. Abraham was old, and it was time for Isaac to be married. The search for Isaac's wife begins in Genesis 24:1–4:

Abraham was now old and well advanced in years, and the LORD had blessed him in every way. He said to the chief servant in his household [Eliezer], the one in charge of all that he had, “Put your hand under my thigh. I want you to swear by the LORD, the God of heaven and the God of earth, that you will not get a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I am living, but will go to my country and my own relatives and get a wife for my son Isaac. ”

The strongest muscle in a man's body is the muscle under his thigh. So Eliezer was going to swear by Abraham's strength, which means that he would be swearing by the LORD. How did Abraham know there would be a woman

there for Isaac to marry? Remember that while he was in Beersheba he had received word about Nahor's children. However, Eliezer had questions of his own:

The servant asked him, “What if the woman is unwilling to come back with me to this land? Shall I then take your son back to the country you came from?” “Make sure that you do not take my son back there,” Abraham said. “The LORD, the God of heaven, who brought me out of my father’s household and my native land and who spoke to me and promised me on oath, saying, ‘To your offspring I will give this land’ — he will send his angel before you so that you can get a wife for my son from there. If the woman is unwilling to come back with you, then you will be released from this oath of mine. Only do not take my son back there” (Genesis 24:5–8).

Abraham's faith was strong on this occasion. He knew that God would guide Eliezer to just the right person for Isaac to marry. Why did Abraham insist so strongly that Isaac not be taken to the land of the Canaanites? This becomes evident close to the end of the Book of Joshua because Joshua challenged the people to choose whom they would serve, whether it was the gods their fathers served beyond the Euphrates or the gods of the Amorites among whom they lived. Abraham knew that all of his relatives were idolaters and worshiped many gods. For that reason he did not want his son to go back to that land of idolatry.

Eliezer's Journey and Its Results

The servant showed that he would be obedient to Abraham's instructions. Eliezer had a strong faith in God:

So the servant put his hand under the thigh of his master Abraham and swore an oath to him concerning this matter. Then the servant took ten of his master's camels and left, taking with him all kinds of good things from his master. He set out for Aram Naharaim and made his way to the town of Nahor. He had the camels kneel down near the well outside the town; it was toward evening, the time the women go out to draw water. Then he prayed, "O LORD, God of my master Abraham, give me success today, and show kindness to my master Abraham. See, I am standing beside this spring, and the daughters of the townspeople are coming out to draw water. May it be that when I say to a girl, 'Please let down your jar that I may have a drink,' and she says, 'Drink, and I'll water your camels too' — let her be the one you have chosen for your servant Isaac. By this I will know that you have shown kindness to my master" (Genesis 24:9–14).

Camels drink for a long while. They can drink buckets and buckets of water. So evidently he wanted a woman who would work, a woman who was willing not only to give him a drink but also to stay there for the hour or so it would take to water all those camels. Something happened before he had even finished praying. Eliezer knew what to say; he had just prayed about it:

Before he had finished praying, Rebekah came out with her jar on her shoulder. She was the daughter of Bethuel son of Milcah, who was the wife of Abraham's brother Nahor. The girl was very beautiful, a virgin; no man had ever lain with her. She went down to the spring, filled her jar and

came up again. The servant hurried to meet her and said, “Please give me a little water from your jar.” “Drink, my lord,” she said, and quickly lowered the jar to her hands and gave him a drink. After she had given him a drink, she said, “I’ll draw water for your camels too, until they have finished drinking” (Genesis 24:15–19).

Eliezer watched closely to see if God had answered his prayer. The answer is given in Genesis 24:20–28:

So she quickly emptied her jar into the trough, ran back to the well to draw more water, and drew enough for all his camels. Without saying a word, the man watched her closely to learn whether or not the LORD had made his journey successful. When the camels had finished drinking, the man took out a gold nose ring weighing a beka and two gold bracelets weighing ten shekels [about one hundred dollars worth of material]. Then he asked, “Whose daughter are you? Please tell me, is there room in your father’s house for us to spend the night?” She answered him, “I am the daughter of Bethuel, the son that Milcah bore to Nahor.” And she added, “We have plenty of straw and fodder, as well as room for you to spend the night.” Then the man bowed down and worshiped the LORD, saying, “Praise be to the LORD, the God of my master Abraham, who has not abandoned his kindness and faithfulness to my master. As for me, the LORD has led me on the journey to the house of my master’s relatives.” The girl ran and told her mother’s household about these things.

Then Eliezer went to Laban to explain why he had come to their land and why Rebekah was suddenly wearing a nose ring and two gold bracelets:

Now Rebekah had a brother named Laban, and he hurried out to the man at the spring. As soon as he had seen the nose ring, and the bracelets on his sister's arms, and had heard Rebekah tell what the man said to her, he went out to the man and found him standing by the camels near the spring. "Come, you who are blessed by the LORD," he said. "Why are you standing out here? I have prepared the house and a place for the camels." So the man went to the house, and the camels were unloaded. Straw and fodder were brought for the camels, and water for him and his men to wash their feet. Then food was set before him, but he said, "I will not eat until I have told you what I have to say." "Then tell us," Laban said. So he said, "I am Abraham's servant. The LORD has blessed my master abundantly, and he has become wealthy. He has given him sheep and cattle, silver and gold, menservants and maidservants, and camels and donkeys. My master's wife Sarah has borne him a son in her old age, and he has given him everything he owns. And my master made me swear an oath, and said, 'You must not get a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, in whose land I live, but go to my father's family and to my own clan, and get a wife for my son.' Then I asked my master, "What if the woman will not come back with me?" (Genesis 24:29–39).

Eliezer went on to explain that if Rebekah refused to come with him, he would be freed from his oath to Abraham.

But he had prayed to God about this as he came to the spring. He told Laban what he had prayed for. Eliezer told Laban the results of that prayer. Eliezer explained the nose ring and the bracelets. He had given her these things, and now he was asking if she would be the wife of his master, Isaac in Genesis 24:45–51:

“Before I finished praying in my heart, Rebekah came out, with her jar on her shoulder. She went down to the spring and drew water, and I said to her, ‘Please give me a drink.’ She quickly lowered her jar from her shoulder and said, ‘Drink, and I’ll water your camels too.’ So I drank, and she watered the camels also. I asked her, ‘Whose daughter are you?’ She said, ‘The daughter of Bethuel son of Nahor, whom Milcah bore to him.’ Then I put the ring in her nose and the bracelets on her arms, and I bowed down and worshiped the LORD. I praised the LORD, the God of my master Abraham, who had led me on the right road to get the granddaughter of my master’s brother for his son. Now if you will show kindness and faithfulness to my master, tell me; and if not, tell me, so I may know which way to turn.” Laban and Bethuel answered, “This is from the LORD; we can say nothing to you one way or the other. Here is Rebekah; take her and go, and let her become the wife of your master’s son, as the LORD has directed.”

Isaac and Rebekah’s Marriage

It looks as though Rebekah did not have much say in this. But in Genesis 24:52–66, Rebekah agreed to go with Eliezer and be Isaac’s wife. Isaac saw them coming, and he went out to meet Rebekah. They saw him approaching, and

they told Rebekah that this was the master. Rebekah looked up and got down off her camel. She put on her veil and covered herself. Genesis 24:67 shows Isaac's reaction:

Isaac brought her into the tent of his mother Sarah, and he married Rebekah. So she became his wife, and he loved her; and Isaac was comforted after his mother's death.

This was an ordinary mid-eastern custom. Rebekah really did have very little choice, and even when she was asked if she wanted to go, she agreed to go. She and Isaac had never seen each other until this occasion but immediately accepted each other as husband and wife. He was comforted over his mother's death. There is an interesting statement in Genesis 24:67, “*So she became his wife, and he loved her...*” In the Western culture the normal order is that the man loves the woman, and then she becomes his wife; but in the Eastern culture she first became his wife, and then he loved her. This indicates that love is something a person can learn. It indicates that marriage is something that someone can accept, and within that marriage a man can come to love a woman.

Rebekah was a tricky woman. This was shown when trouble came between her and her husband concerning their two sons. But this is the end of this particular part of the journey. Abraham was about to die, but before his death Genesis 25:1–6 records that he married again after Sarah had died. However, despite the birth of six sons, he left Isaac everything:

Abraham took another wife, whose name was Keturah. She bore him Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak and Shuah. Jokshan was the father of Sheba and Dedan; the descendants of Dedan

were the Asshurites, the Letushites and the Leummites. The sons of Midian were Ephah, Epher, Hanoch, Abida and Eladaah. All these were descendants of Keturah. Abraham left everything he owned to Isaac. But while he was still living, he gave gifts to the sons of his concubines and sent them away from his son Isaac to the land of the east.

The Last Days of Abraham

Hebron — the Burial of Abraham

The last days of Abraham along with his burial are recorded in Genesis 25:7–11:

Altogether, Abraham lived a hundred and seventy-five years. Then Abraham breathed his last and died at a good old age, an old man and full of years; and he was gathered to his people. His sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah near Mamre, in the field of Ephron son of Zohar the Hittite, the field Abraham had bought from the Hittites. There Abraham was buried with his wife Sarah. After Abraham's death, God blessed his son Isaac, who then lived near Beer Lahai Roi.

Remember that Beer Lahai Roi was the place where Ishmael's mother, Hagar, was comforted. They both received the water that preserved their life. This place was in the southernmost part of the promised land. This was where Abraham's journey came to an end. His life had certainly not been without problems. He was a great man. He traveled from one end of the world, at that time, to the other. He was put in a rather obscure and isolated place so that he could worship the one God he loved more than he loved life. But

now Abraham was dead. His life was over, and now the story focuses on the life of Isaac.

Abraham's Faith Examined in Hebrews 11

In Hebrews 11 the author of this book gave a testimony of Abraham's faith and the greatness of this man's life:

By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going. By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God. By faith Abraham, even though he was past age — and Sarah herself was barren — was enabled to become a father because he considered him faithful who had made the promise. And so from this one man, and he as good as dead, came descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as countless as the sand on the seashore ... By faith Abraham, when God tested him, offered Isaac as a sacrifice. He who had received the promises was about to sacrifice his one and only son, even though God had said to him, "It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned." Abraham reasoned that God could raise the dead, and figuratively speaking, he did receive Isaac back from death (Hebrews 11:8–12, 17–19).

This is a quick survey of Abraham's life. Faith goes when it does not know where it is going. Faith receives even though it has not yet received. Faith believes even when it is impossible for something to be fulfilled, and faith reasons

that God is even able to raise the dead. In a real sense Abraham did receive his son back from the dead.

Abraham's Offspring by Ishmael

Genesis 25:12–18 lists the names of the sons of Ishmael:

This is the account of Abraham's son Ishmael, whom Sarah's maidservant, Hagar the Egyptian, bore to Abraham. These are the names of the sons of Ishmael, listed in the order of their birth: Nebaioth the firstborn of Ishmael, Kedar, Adbeel, Mibsam, Mishma, Dumah, Massa, Hadad, Tema, Jetur, Naphish and Kedemah. These were the sons of Ishmael, and these are the names of the twelve tribal rulers according to their settlements and camps. Altogether, Ishmael lived a hundred and thirty-seven years. He breathed his last and died, and he was gathered to his people. His descendants settled in the area from Havilah to Shur, near the border of Egypt, as you go toward Asshur. And they lived in hostility toward all their brothers.

Ishmael would be the father of hostile and warring nations throughout all of time. History has shown this to be true. The Arabs have always lived in that desert, moving around in tribal groups. They have never been a strong nation. At one time they were united, calling themselves the United Arab Republic, but now, as always, they are a scattered people. They are not a settled nation. Isaac's descendants will become a settled nation, Israel.

It is good that Bible students learn the lesson of faith. Abraham was a man of faith, Isaac was a man of faith, and therefore they could live in a united condition with God and

with mankind. Christians need to find the way to be united in Jesus Christ.

Abraham's Journeys

1. **Ur of the Chaldeans** is where Abram was born.
2. **Haran** is where Terah, his father, died, and Abram was called a second time to Palestine.
3. **Shechem**, between Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim, Abram built an altar.
4. **Bethel**, Abram built an altar to God.
5. **Egypt**, Abram told the lie that Sarai was just his sister. Pharaoh sent him away with Hagar, the hand-maid.
6. **Bethel**, trouble between Lot and Abram's herdsmen.
7. **Hebron**, trouble came from the kings of Mesopotamia.
8. **Dan**, Abram rescued Lot.
9. **Hebron** again.
10. **Gerar**, Abram lied again, to Abimelech, king of the Canaanites, birth of Isaac.
11. **Beer-Sheba**, Abram made a covenant of peace with Abimelech.
12. **Moriah**, Abram planned to offer Isaac on the altar.
13. **Beer-Sheba**, Nahor's granddaughter, Rebekah will become Isaac's wife.
14. **Hebron**, death and burial of Sarah in cave of Machpelah.
15. **Beer-Sheba**, Rebekah chosen to be Isaac's wife.
16. **Hebron**, Abraham died at 175 years, buried by both Isaac and Ishmael in the cave of Machpelah at Mamre.

Isaac and Jacob

Genesis 22:1–28:22

Review and Introduction

The previous chapter finished the study of the life of Abraham, and what a life it was! What a person Abraham was; what an encouragement he is to the saints. He had a son whose name was “Laughter” (Isaac) to remind Abraham and Sarah all of their lives that they had laughed at the promise of God. But God did bring happiness, so in the end it was good laughter. There was a sense of honor and joy in having this boy. There are some sons, some men who are very aggressive, very loud and very prevalent. Isaac was not that kind of man. Isaac was maybe the original “quiet man.” His life was wrapped up first of all in his relationship and love for his mother, second in his relationship and love for his wife, and third in his relationship and love for his children.

The Life of Isaac

The Submissive Son, Devoted Husband, and Indulgent Father

It appears that there was nothing unique about Isaac. For that reason Bible students usually end up studying about him during the study of Abraham’s life as the submissive son. He was the submissive son as he submitted to Abraham’s will in offering him as a sacrifice in Genesis 22. He is then seen as the devoted husband in Genesis 24 as Rebekah was

brought to him from Paddan Aram. He went out to meet her, they loved one another, they established their home, and he was devoted to her. Then he was the indulgent father in Genesis 25–28 as the Scriptures tell of Esau, his favorite son, and Jacob, Rebekah's favorite.

Isaac and Abimelech

Isaac's Migration to Gerar

There is one single incident in which Isaac stood alone, separate from his family, separate from his wife, separate from his children, yet in a way not separate. Genesis 26 has the account of Isaac and Abimelech: “*Now there was a famine in the land — besides the earlier famine of Abraham’s time — and Isaac went to Abimelech king of the Philistines in Gerar*” (Genesis 26:1). This was not the same Abimelech who had been alive in Abraham’s day. This was his son, a much younger man. Genesis 26:2–3 says:

The LORD appeared to Isaac and said, “Do not go down to Egypt; live in the land where I tell you to live. Stay in this land for a while, and I will be with you and will bless you . . .”

God told Isaac not to go where Abraham had gone. He told him to not make the same mistake that Abraham had made. He was to stay in the promised land for a while, and God would bless him. God further said, “*...For to you and your descendants I will give all these lands and will confirm the oath I swore to your father Abraham*” (Genesis 26:3). Then God made the same covenant with Isaac that He had made with Abraham:

“I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and will give them all these lands,

and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because Abraham obeyed me and kept my requirements, my commands, my decrees and my laws” (Genesis 26:4–5).

So Isaac stayed in Gerar (cf. Genesis 26:6). He was on his way to Egypt, because he could find grain down in Egypt. But God said, “No, you live on what I give you. Do not seek more in Egypt’s land. I have made a covenant with you because I made a covenant with Abraham. I will bless you because Abraham obeyed me.” However, in Genesis 26:7 Isaac made one of the same mistakes that his father had made: “*When the men of that place asked him about his wife, he said, ‘She is my sister’ ...*” That was not even true. With Abraham, his statement was true with an intent to deceive. But with Isaac, before Rebekah was his wife, she was his cousin. In no way was she his sister “*...because he was afraid to say, ‘She is my wife.’ He thought, ‘The men of this place might kill me on account of Rebekah, because she is beautiful’*” (Genesis 26:7).

Isaac did not have faith in God, at least on this occasion. He did not believe the Word of God, when God had told him to stay in that land and that He would bless him. God had said, “I will protect you. I will honor you. Do not make the mistake that Abraham made.” But Isaac made the mistake in exactly the same place to the son of the man Abraham had lied to. This Abimelech had probably heard that story because he did not take Rebekah into his house. Genesis 26:8–9 says:

When Isaac had been there a long time, Abimelech king of the Philistines looked down from a window and saw Isaac caressing his wife Rebekah. So Abimelech summoned Isaac and said, “She is really your wife! Why did you say, ‘She is my sister’?

Isaac answered him, “Because I thought I might lose my life on account of her.”

Isaac apparently underestimated the morality and character of these people. His answer to Abimelech resulted in Abimelech warning his own people regarding Isaac and Rebekah:

Then Abimelech said, “What is this you have done to us? One of the men might well have slept with your wife, and you would have brought guilt upon us.” So Abimelech gave orders to all the people: “Anyone who molests this man or his wife shall surely be put to death.” Isaac planted crops in that land and the same year reaped a hundredfold, because the LORD blessed him. The man became rich, and his wealth continued to grow until he became very wealthy (Genesis 26:10–13).

Isaac had already been wealthy with Abraham's possessions, but then he was very wealthy:

He had so many flocks and herds and servants that the Philistines envied him. So all the wells that his father's servants had dug in the time of his father Abraham, the Philistines stopped up, filling them with earth. Then Abimelech said to Isaac, “Move away from us; you have become too powerful for us.” So Isaac moved away from there and encamped in the Valley of Gerar and settled there. Isaac reopened the wells... (Genesis 26:14–18).

Genesis 26:18–25 talks about the rebuilding that Isaac did throughout all the land. Then Genesis 26:26–31 talks about peace between Isaac and Abimelech:

Meanwhile, Abimelech had come to him from Gerar, with Ahuzzath his personal adviser and Phicol the commander of his forces. Isaac asked them, “Why have you come to me, since you were hostile to me and sent me away?” They answered, “We saw clearly that the LORD was with you; so we said, ‘There ought to be a sworn agreement between us’ — between us and you. Let us make a treaty with you that you will do us no harm, just as we did not molest you but always treated you well and sent you away in peace. And now you are blessed by the LORD.” Isaac then made a feast for them, and they ate and drank. Early the next morning the men swore an oath to each other. Then Isaac sent them on their way, and they left him in peace.

The Troubled Life of Jacob

The Birth of the Twins

Isaac was a blessed man of God, the one with whom the covenant had been made, but he made the same mistake that his father had made in underestimating the morality of the people among whom he lived. Isaac was a quiet man, but he had two sons who were not quiet men.

Abraham was a prominent man, but Isaac, his son, was not. Instead, Isaac's son, Jacob, became the prominent man in the story recorded in the Book of Genesis. Genesis 25:19 is the point where Scripture begins the life of Jacob, “*This is the account of Abraham's son Isaac. Abraham became the father of Isaac.*” It is interesting to note that in the Book of Genesis each time there is a statement like, “*This is the account of ...*” or “*These are the generations of ...*” a certain man, it is the son who is the prominent person. For example, “*This is the account of Terah.*” but Abraham is the

prominent person. “*This is the account of Isaac,*” and Jacob is the prominent person. Genesis 25:20–23 says:

And Isaac was forty years old when he married Rebekah daughter of Bethuel the Aramean from Paddan Aram and sister of Laban the Aramean. Isaac prayed to the LORD on behalf of his wife, because she was barren. The LORD answered his prayer, and his wife Rebekah became pregnant. The babies jostled each other within her, and she said, “Why is this happening to me?” So she went to inquire of the LORD. The LORD said to her, “Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples from within you will be separated; one people will be stronger than the other, and the older will serve the younger.”

This makes two men in a row whom God had caused to marry barren women so that He, God, might get the credit for the children, for the seed. When Isaac prayed, “*The LORD answered his prayer, and his wife Rebekah became pregnant.*”

Esau never served Jacob, but later on it was true of the nations. The nation from Esau, Edom, would serve the nation from Jacob, Israel; this is what God said. There would be two nations, two people. One people would be stronger than the other people, and the older people would serve the younger people. That was the prophecy.

Now comes the time for the birth of these children:

When the time came for her to give birth, there were twin boys in her womb. The first to come out was red, and his whole body was like a hairy garment; so they named him Esau [which means either “hairy” or “red and hairy”]. After this, his

brother came out, with his hand grasping Esau's heel; so he was named Jacob [which literally means "supplanter" or "one who takes the place of another"]. Isaac was sixty years old when Rebekah gave birth to them (Genesis 25:24–26).

Jacob, the Supplanter, at Home

Isaac and Rebekah had been married twenty years without children, and then they had twins. The prediction was that both children would become nations and that the nation that came from the older would serve the nation that came from the younger. There was a prediction even in the color of hair because Esau was going to be a man of the fields, a man who wanted to be outdoors, a bloody person. Jacob was going to be the more quiet person, his mother's favorite. Jacob also tried to take his brother's place:

The boys grew up, and Esau became a skillful hunter, a man of the open country, while Jacob was a quiet man, staying among the tents. Isaac, who had a taste for wild game, loved Esau, but Rebekah loved Jacob (Genesis 25:27–28).

This did not mean that they had no love for the other son, but there was definitely favoritism shown among the parents. Anytime there is favoritism in a home, there is going to be trouble. Esau was loved by Isaac because he brought in the wild game that his soul desired. Jacob was loved by Rebekah because he was the quiet man of the house.

Genesis 25:29–31 shows how the meaning of Jacob's name, "the supplanter" fits him:

Once when Jacob was cooking some stew [which was just beans or lentils], Esau came in from the

open country, famished. He said to Jacob, “Quick, let me have some of that red stew! I’m famished!” (That is why he was also called Edom [That means “red.” He’s called both hairy and red.] Jacob replied, “First sell me your birthright.”

The birthright was the right to the double portion. If a person had three children, he divided his inheritance four ways and the one with the birthright got one-half and the others each got one-fourth. If a person had two children, as it was here, he divided his inheritance three ways. The one with the birthright got two-thirds, and the one without the birthright got one-third. Esau was told by Jacob to give up thirty-three and a third percent, two-thirds of all of his father’s possessions for a bowl of beans. What a foolish thing! It is comparable to giving up eternal salvation for something this world has to offer. Esau was thinking about his hunger, so he said: “*Look, I am about to die,’ Esau said. ‘What good is the birthright to me?’*” (Genesis 25:32). Was Esau really about to die? Absolutely not! He could come home and eat whatever his wife had prepared for him, but he was a worldly, lustful man. He felt as though he had to be satisfied at that very moment!

But Jacob said, “Swear to me first.” So he swore an oath to him, selling his birthright to Jacob. Then Jacob gave Esau some bread and some lentil stew. He ate and drank, and then got up and left. So Esau despised his birthright (Genesis 25:33–34).

Esau had just sold his birthright. He sold his birthright of being the father’s number one son for a bowl of red beans. Jacob had begun his supplanting work. He had stolen his brother’s birthright. But Genesis 27 shows that Jacob was not finished with Esau. Next he stole Esau’s blessing. The

birthright was the double portion, but the blessing was through whom the seed line was traced. The one who supplants was going to supplant his brother's right to the seed line also:

When Isaac was old and his eyes were so weak that he could no longer see, he called for Esau his older son and said to him, "My son." "Here I am," he answered. Isaac said, "I am now an old man and don't know the day of my death. Now then, get your weapons — your quiver and bow — and go out to the open country to hunt some wild game for me. Prepare me the kind of tasty food I like and bring it to me to eat, so that I may give you my blessing before I die" (Genesis 27:1–4).

Isaac might have thought that if he died without blessing Esau that Jacob would get the blessing too. However, someone else was listening in on this conversation and was ready to act quickly:

Now Rebekah was listening as Isaac spoke to his son Esau. When Esau left for the open country to hunt game and bring it back, Rebekah said to her son Jacob, "Look, I overheard your father say to your brother Esau, 'Bring me some game and prepare me some tasty food to eat, so that I may give you my blessing in the presence of the LORD before I die.' Now, my son, listen carefully and do what I tell you: Go out to the flock and bring me two choice young goats, so I can prepare some tasty food for your father, just the way he likes it. Then take it to your father to eat, so that he may give you his blessing before he dies" (Genesis 27:5–10).

Apparently, Isaac would not be able to tell the difference in how Esau prepared the food and how Rebekah prepared it. This very well could be Rebekah's thought. But Jacob was thinking as well and made known his concern to his mother:

Jacob said to Rebekah his mother, “But my brother Esau is a hairy man, and I’m a man with smooth skin. What if my father touches me? I would appear to be tricking him and would bring down a curse on myself rather than a blessing.” His mother said to him, “My son, let the curse fall on me. Just do what I say; go and get them for me.” So he went and got them and brought them to his mother, and she prepared some tasty food, just the way his father liked it. Then Rebekah took the best clothes of Esau her older son, which she had in the house, and put them on her younger son Jacob. She also covered his hands and the smooth part of his neck with the goatskins. Then she handed to her son Jacob the tasty food and the bread she had made. He went to his father and said, “My father.” “Yes, my son,” he answered. “Who is it?” Jacob said to his father, “I am Esau your firstborn. I have done as you told me. Please sit up and eat some of my game so that you may give me your blessing.” Isaac asked his son, “How did you find it so quickly, my son?” “The LORD your God gave me success,” he replied (Genesis 27:11–20).

Notice what Jacob did here. He brought the LORD into his lie by saying that it was the LORD who blessed him. However, Isaac did not seem convinced:

Then Isaac said to Jacob, “Come near so I can touch you, my son, to know whether you really are

my son Esau or not.” Jacob went close to his father Isaac, who touched him and said, “The voice is the voice of Jacob, but the hands are the hands of Esau.” He did not recognize him, for his hands were hairy like those of his brother Esau; so he blessed him. “Are you really my son Esau?” he asked. “I am,” he replied. Then he said, “My son, bring me some of your game to eat, so that I may give you my blessing.” Jacob brought it to him and he ate; and he brought some wine and he drank. Then his father Isaac said to him, “Come here, my son, and kiss me.” So he went to him and kissed him. When Isaac caught the smell of his clothes, he blessed him and said, “Ah, the smell of my son is like the smell of a field that the LORD has blessed. May God give you of heaven’s dew and of earth’s richness — an abundance of grain and new wine. May nations serve you and peoples bow down to you. Be lord over your brothers, and may the sons of your mother bow down to you. May those who curse you be cursed and those who bless you be blessed” (Genesis 27:21–29).

Esau’s Bitterness and Hatred

Isaac was fooled, and Jacob received the birthright with a bowl of beans and the blessing with a bunch of lies. This fact would not soon be lost on Isaac and Esau in Genesis 27:30–33:

After Isaac finished blessing him and Jacob had scarcely left his father’s presence, his brother Esau came in from hunting. He too prepared some tasty food and brought it to his father. Then he said to him, “My father, sit up and eat some of my game,

so that you may give me your blessing.” His father Isaac asked him, “Who are you?” “I am your son,” he answered, “your firstborn, Esau.” Isaac trembled violently and said, “Who was it, then, that hunted game and brought it to me? I ate it just before you came and I blessed him — and indeed he will be blessed!”

Isaac recognized that he could not repent and give Esau the blessing, for he had already given it to Jacob. Esau knew this as well, and his anguish was obvious:

When Esau heard his father’s words, he burst out with a loud and bitter cry and said to his father, “Bless me — me too, my father!” But he said, “Your brother came deceitfully and took your blessing.” Esau said, “Isn’t he rightly named Jacob? He has deceived me these two times: He took my birthright, and now he’s taken my blessing!” Then he asked, “Haven’t you reserved any blessing for me?” Isaac answered Esau, “I have made him lord over you and have made all his relatives his servants, and I have sustained him with grain and new wine. So what can I possibly do for you, my son?” Esau said to his father, “Do you have only one blessing, my father? Bless me too, my father!” Then Esau wept aloud (Genesis 27:34–38).

Sadly, Isaac could not bless him, but for Esau’s sake, he did have some words to say to him that would impact the descendants of Esau:

His father Isaac answered him, “Your dwelling will be away from the earth’s richness, away from the dew of heaven above. You will live by the sword

and you will serve your brother. But when you grow restless, you will throw his yoke from off your neck. Esau held a grudge against Jacob because of the blessing his father had given him. He said to himself, “The days of mourning for my father are near; then I will kill my brother Jacob” (Genesis 27:39–41).

It is understandable why Esau felt this way — Jacob stole his birthright and blessing. But look again at the anger, jealousy, and wrath that Esau had. He had devised a plan of his own. He would just wait until his father died and then kill his brother. It is apparent that Esau had made this threat out loud because word got back to his mother:

When Rebekah was told what her older son Esau had said, she sent for her younger son Jacob and said to him, “Your brother Esau is consoling himself with the thought of killing you. Now then, my son, do what I say: Flee at once to my brother Laban in Haran. Stay with him for a while until your brother’s fury subsides. When your brother is no longer angry with you and forgets what you did to him, I’ll send word for you to come back from there. Why should I lose both of you in one day?” Then Rebekah said to Isaac, “I’m disgusted with living because of these Hittite women. If Jacob takes a wife from among the women of this land, from Hittite women like these, my life will not be worth living” (Genesis 27:42–46).

Rebekah had to come up with a way to get Jacob out of the house, so she tricked Isaac into sending Jacob away to the land of Haran. Isaac seemed to agree with Rebekah:

So Isaac called for Jacob and blessed him and commanded him: “Do not marry a Canaanite woman. Go at once to Paddan Aram, to the house of your mother’s father Bethuel. Take a wife for yourself there, from among the daughters of Laban, your mother’s brother (Genesis 28:1–2).

So Jacob left Beersheba and set out for Haran. He came to the place where Abraham had lived on three different occasions, Bethel, where he decided to spent the night. He found a rock for a pillow, lay down, went to sleep and had a dream. Even in the twenty-first century, this dream is called “Jacob’s Ladder” by Bible students. In this dream there was a ladder going up into heaven, and angels were going up and down on the ladder stopping at Jacob. Quite simply Jacob was being told by God that he was now the head of the house:

There above it stood the LORD, and he said: “I am LORD, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac. I will give you and your descendants the land on which you are lying. Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south. All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring. I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.” When Jacob awoke from his sleep, he thought, “Surely the LORD is in this place, and I was not aware of it ...How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God; this is the gate of heaven” (Genesis 28:13–17).

This was an awesome place, so Jacob “*...called that place Bethel.*” This was the very house of God. It had been called Bethel earlier just because that was what it was called when Moses wrote the Book of Genesis. But now it would be called “the house of God” because Jacob had met God there.

Early in the morning Jacob got up and set up a pillar, or monument, in this place, the house of God, and poured oil on it to consecrate it. Then he made a vow to God:

... *If God will be with me and will watch over me on this journey I am taking and will give me food to eat and clothes to wear so that I return safely to my father's house, then the LORD will be my God and this stone that I have set up as a pillar will be God's house, and of all that you give me I will give you a tenth*” (Genesis 28:20–22).

The tenth belonged to the LORD. Abraham knew that to be true in Melchizedek’s presence, and Jacob knew it in the presence of God. He left a thief, and God would teach him step by step the futility and stupidity of getting by on one’s wits rather than by faith. The first lesson he learned, as he left Beersheba running for his life, was that God was surely with him because the very first thing God told him was:

I will give you and your descendants the land on which you are lying ...I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you” (Genesis 28:13–15).

Jacob said, “If you do that you will be my God, and I will bring the tenth back to you.”

The next chapter continues with the lessons that God taught Jacob, the thief, that he might become Israel, the prince of God's house.

The Servant in Paddan Aram

Genesis 29:1–31:55

Review and Introduction

This chapter continues with the study of the life of Jacob, the supplanter, at home as he supplanted his brother out of both his birthright, the double portion of his father's inheritance, and in the blessing, the one who was to be the head of the house and the one through whom the seed line was to be traced. It cost Jacob more than the money he spent and more than the lies he told. It cost him twenty-plus years spent away from home and away from the parents he loved. Jacob spent the night at Bethel, where God showed him the vision of the ladder with angels descending, which symbolized how God would now speak directly to him, and angels ascending on the ladder, which symbolized that God would listen to the needs, prayers, concerns, and pleas of Jacob. Now Jacob was on his way to Paddan Aram. The purpose of his journey was to escape Esau's wrath, but it was also to find a wife from among his mother's people. So, after studying "the supplanter" at home, it is time to study "the servant" as he arrived at Paddan Aram. Here he would learn what it was to serve someone who had basically the same tricky and crooked character he had.

Jacob in Paddan Aram

Jacob's Meeting with Rachel

Genesis 29:1–8 tells of Jacob's arrival in Paddan Aram:

Then Jacob continued on his journey and came to the land of the eastern peoples. There he saw a well in the field, with three flocks of sheep lying near it because the flocks were watered from that well. The stone over the mouth of the well was large. When all the flocks were gathered there, the shepherds would roll the stone away from the well's mouth and water the sheep. Then they would return the stone to its place over the mouth of the well. Jacob asked the shepherds, "My brothers, where are you from?" "We're from Haran," they replied. He said to them, "Do you know Laban, Nahor's grandson?" "Yes, we know him," they answered. Then Jacob asked them, "Is he well?" "Yes, he is," they said, "and here comes his daughter Rachel with the sheep." "Look," he said, "the sun is still high; it is not time for the flocks to be gathered. Water the sheep and take them back to pasture." "We can't," they replied, "until all the flocks are gathered and the stone has been rolled away from the mouth of the well. Then we will water the sheep."

Now Rachel was introduced as someone who was obviously a hard working woman:

While he was still talking with them, Rachel came with her father's sheep, for she was a shepherdess. When Jacob saw Rachel daughter of Laban, his mother's brother, and Laban's sheep, he went over and rolled the stone away from the mouth of the well and watered his uncle's sheep. Then Jacob kissed Rachel [a greeting of kinsman, not a kiss of sexual love] and began to weep aloud. He had told Rachel that he was a relative of her father and a

son of Rebekah. So she ran and told her father. As soon as Laban heard the news about Jacob, his sister's son, he hurried to meet him. He embraced him and kissed him and brought him to his home, and there Jacob told him all these things. Then Laban said to him, "You are my own flesh and blood" (Genesis 29:9–14).

Jacob's Double Marriage

Jacob spent his entire first month in Paddan Aram before he had his first conversation with Laban. And that conversation reveals that Laban had no intention of letting Jacob work for free:

...After Jacob had stayed with him for a whole month, Laban said to him, "Just because you are a relative of mine, should you work for me for nothing? Tell me what your wages should be" (Genesis 29:15).

Obviously, Jacob had been working for no wage, but work was not all that was on Jacob's mind. He had come to this land to find a wife among these people. Continuing in Genesis 29:16–17:

Now Laban had two daughters; the name of the older was Leah, and the name of the younger was Rachel. Leah had weak eyes, but Rachel was lovely in form, and beautiful.

That word “but” would mean there was something about those weak eyes that made Leah unattractive. Leah was an unattractive person physically, “*but Rachel was lovely in form, and beautiful*” in face. Jacob was in love with Rachel.

He was acting like a man of the world. He did not see below the surface. He only saw the surface of Rachel. Genesis 29:18 says, “*Jacob was in love with Rachel and said, ‘I’ll work for you seven years in return for your younger daughter Rachel.’*”

Remember that Jacob did not leave Beersheba with Isaac’s possessions. They were still in Isaac’s control because Isaac was still alive. Jacob had no money, so he had nothing to pay as a bride price for this girl. So in order to pay the bride price, he said he would give seven years of his life for Rachel. Laban said:

... “*It’s better that I give her to you than to some other man. Stay here with me.*” So Jacob served seven years to get Rachel, but they seemed like only a few days to him because of his love for her (Genesis 29:19–20).

Genesis 29:21–22 says that the seven years were over. Jacob had rightly earned Rachel to be his wife:

Then Jacob said to Laban, “Give me my wife. My time is completed, and I want to lie with her.” So Laban brought together all the people of the place and gave a feast.

In those days, when they gave a feast they did more than eat; they also drank. The wine flowed freely and at the end of the day, Jacob did not see much better than Isaac did, and Isaac was blind. What happened next turned out to be quite a surprise for Jacob:

But when evening came, he took his daughter Leah [the one who wasn’t that attractive] and gave her to Jacob, and Jacob lay with her. And Laban gave his

servant girl Zilpah to his daughter as her maidservant. When morning came, there was Leah! [Notice that exclamation point.] So Jacob said to Laban, “What is this you have done to me? I served you for Rachel, didn’t I? Why have you deceived me?” (Genesis 29:23–25).

If Esau had been there, he would have been laughing. The deceiver was now deceived. Jacob was meeting his match in his mother’s brother, Laban. Laban replied in 29:26–27:

... “It is not our custom here to give the younger daughter in marriage before the older one. Finish this daughter’s bridal week; then we will give you the younger one also, in return for another seven years of work.”

Jacob was going to have to spend fourteen years for two daughters, and Laban was rid of his less attractive daughter. However, because of Jacob’s love for Rachel, he served the time: “*And Jacob did so. He finished the week with Leah, and then Laban gave him his daughter Rachel to be his wife*” (Genesis 29:28). Laban trusted Jacob to serve the additional seven years. What was Jacob going to do otherwise? He had already served seven years and gotten Leah. Now he got Rachel but would serve another seven years for her. Genesis 29:29–30 says that Laban followed up on his word:

Laban gave his servant girl Bilhah to his daughter Rachel as her maidservant. Jacob lay with Rachel also, and he loved Rachel more than Leah. And he worked for Laban another seven years.

Jacob's Twelve Sons

Fourteen years for two wives, one he wanted and one he got. Now, he loved Rachel more than he loved Leah, just as Rebekah had loved Jacob more than Esau. Jacob needed to learn a lesson. God was going to teach Jacob about whom he needed to love and that he should not be prejudiced in his love. But Genesis 29:31 shows that Jacob was prejudiced in his love, “*When the LORD saw that Leah was not loved ...*” (Genesis 29:31). That is not literally the way it was. The Bible uses this phrase over and over again to mean “not loved as much.” As a matter of fact, God said in the Book of Malachi, “... ‘*Yet I have loved Jacob, but Esau I have hated ...*’” (Malachi 1:2–3). This means that God loved Jacob more. When God saw Jacob’s lack of love for Leah, “...*he opened her womb, but Rachel was barren. Leah became pregnant and gave birth to a son ...*” (Genesis 29:31–32).

A father takes great pride in his sons, and God was trying to get Jacob to take pride in Leah because Leah was going to bear half of Jacob’s children and Rachel bore only two. Genesis 29:32 says:

Leah became pregnant and gave birth to a son. She named him Reuben [which literally means “the LORD has seen” or “see, a son,” or “see my misery”], for she said, “It is because the LORD has seen my misery. Surely my husband will love me now.”

The key word is “*see.*” Leah seemed to be saying to Jacob, “See who is bearing you the son? You may love Rachel more than you love me, but who is bearing you a son?” She might have been talking to Rachel too. Leah could have been saying, “See, you may think that you have the love of my husband more than I, but look at who is bearing the son.”

Leah was not finished giving Jacob sons:

She conceived again, and when she gave birth to a son she said, “Because the LORD heard that I am not loved, he gave me this one too.” So she named him Simeon [which literally means “The LORD has heard”] (Genesis 29:33).

Again this was a word to Jacob and Rachel. Whom was the LORD hearing? Whom was the LORD blessing? Leah was making it known to Jacob and Rachel that it was she who was blessed by God, not Rachel. But Leah was still not finished:

Again she conceived, and when she gave birth to a son she said, “Now at last my husband will become attached to me, because I have borne him three sons.” So he was named Levi [which means “joined,” the idea being that he is “joined unto me”] (Genesis 29:34).

There was a story being told in the names of these sons, “See a son. Jehovah has heard my prayer. My husband will be joined unto me.” But was Jacob now joined to Leah? Genesis 29:35 says: “*She conceived again, and when she gave birth to a son she said, ‘This time I will praise the LORD.’ So she named him Judah [which means “praise the LORD”]...*” Jacob was in Leah’s tent more than he was in Rachel’s tent because Leah had borne for him four sons. But then Leah stopped her childbearing. Genesis 29:35 states, “...*Then she stopped having children.*”

Genesis 30:1–6 reveals that Rachel was very much aware that she could not have, or was not having, any children. What was she going to do to get the love of her husband back? The Scripture says:

When Rachel saw that she was not bearing Jacob any children, she became jealous of her sister. So she said to Jacob, “Give me children, or I’ll die!” Jacob became angry with her and said, “Am I in the place of God, who has kept you from having children?” Then she said, “Here is Bilhah, my maidservant. Sleep with her so that she can bear children for me and that through her I too can build a family.” So she gave him her servant Bilhah as a wife. Jacob slept with her, and she became pregnant and bore him a son. Then Rachel said, “God has vindicated me; he has listened to my plea and given me a son.” Because of this she named him Dan [which means “judgment” or “he judged”].

Rachel believed that this was a judgment from God that made Jacob become her lover again. Genesis 30:7 says:

Rachel’s servant Bilhah conceived again and bore Jacob a second son. Then Rachel said, “I have had a great struggle with my sister, and I have won.” So she named him Naphtali [which means “wrestled and won”].

Jacob was back in Rachel’s tent. He was in Rachel’s tent, then in Leah’s tent, and then he was back in Rachel’s tent. He was like a ping pong ball. He was being used by his two wives, who were striving for supremacy one over the other. The trickster was being tricked. The deceiver was being deceived.

None of this was going unnoticed by Leah, and as it turned out she also had a maidservant who could bear children:

When Leah saw that she had stopped having children, she took her maidservant Zilpah and gave her to Jacob as a wife. Leah's servant Zilpah bore Jacob a son. Then Leah said, "What good fortune!" So she named him Gad [which means "fortunate" or "good fortune"]" (Genesis 30:9–11).

She saw that what Rachel was doing worked, so she did it, too. What worked for one sister would work for the other. Zilpah conceived again in Genesis 30:12–13: "*Leah's servant Zilpah bore Jacob a second son. Then Leah said, 'How happy I am! The women will call me happy.' So she named him Asher [which means "happy am I"].*" Evidently Jacob was back in Leah's tent. Jacob was learning his lesson. He was being treated even worse than he had treated Esau.

Reuben, who was the oldest, now entered the picture in Genesis 30:14–15:

During wheat harvest, Reuben went out into the fields and found some mandrake plants, which he brought to his mother Leah. Rachel said to Leah, "Please give me some of your son's mandrakes." But she said to her, "Wasn't it enough that you took away my husband? Will you take my son's mandrakes too?" "Very well," Rachel said, "he can sleep with you tonight in return for your son's mandrakes."

It is not known for certain just what these mandrakes were. They were a plant that was believed to have sexual potency and to restore the ability to have children. Just a short time ago Jacob had been in Leah's tent, but between then and now, he was back in Rachel's tent. Anytime that Leah and Zilpah were not bearing him children he was back in

Rachel's tent. So he was back at the place where he should not be.

Rachel was trying to find a way to become fertile, so she agreed to Leah's request to have Jacob. Jacob did not seem to have much to say about all of this, did he? He was just going where his wives told him to go:

So when Jacob came in from the fields that evening, Leah went out to meet him. “You must sleep with me,” she said. “I have hired you with my son’s mandrakes.” So he slept with her that night. God listened to Leah and she became pregnant and bore Jacob a fifth son (Genesis 30:16–17).

It was as if Jacob had become a male prostitute. He had been hired with these mandrakes to sleep in his wife's tent. Leah had been praying that she wanted children and now she had her fifth son. That was nine children all together for Jacob, Genesis 30:18 says: "*Then Leah said, ‘God has rewarded me for giving my maidservant to my husband.’ So she named him Issachar [which means “my hire”].*" Leah hired Jacob to come to her tent with her son's mandrakes, so she called this boy Issachar, which means "my hire."

Leah would show that she was still able to have children. Genesis 30:19 says, "*Leah conceived again and bore Jacob a sixth son.*" She had borne half of the sons and the only daughter that Jacob had. Leah was grateful for this:

Then Leah said, “God has presented me with a precious gift. This time my husband will treat me with honor, because I have borne him six sons.” So she named him Zebulun [which means “he dwells”] (Genesis 30:20).

“My husband will now dwell with me,” she thought, and evidently he did for a long time because he realized that she was truly the one who was blessed of God. She had been blessed to bear six children. Genesis 30:21 says, *“Some time later she gave birth to a daughter and named her Dinah.”* Dinah is the feminine for Dan, so it also means “judgment.” Dinah had no significance in the family as far as continuing the family tree or the family wealth, but she was the only daughter and will be discussed again when the family returns to the land.

Ten children had been born, and Rachel was still barren. During this entire time she had been praying that she would have a child. She finally had her prayer answered in Genesis 30:22–24:

Then God remembered Rachel; he listened to her and opened her womb. She became pregnant and gave birth to a son and said, “God has taken away my disgrace.” She named him Joseph [which means “add to me”], and said, “May the LORD add to me another son.”

Every time she called his name it would be a prayer, “give me another.” That made twelve children. There would be twelve sons, and Rachel would die bearing the twelfth one just outside of the promised land.

Jacob was now ready to go home. He had learned his lesson. He was basically through with the trickery that had gotten him so far down the line. He had been outfoxed by Laban and by his two wives. God had also blessed Laban because of Jacob. Laban’s flocks had multiplied exceedingly because the person with whom God had made the covenant was there. God had made a covenant with Abraham that He would bless him and his sons and their sons also. God had promised that He would bless all of the nations that came

from Abraham, and since Jacob, the covenant one, was in the house of Laban, God was blessing Laban's household. His flocks were increasing greatly.

Jacob Departs Paddan Aram

Finally Jacob said to Laban in Genesis 30:25–26:

After Rachel gave birth to Joseph, Jacob said to Laban, “Send me on my way so I can go back to my own homeland. Give me my wives and children, for whom I have served you, and I will be on my way. You know how much work I’ve done for you.”

Laban did not want that to happen:

But Laban said to him, “If I have found favor in your eyes, please stay. I have learned by divination that the LORD has blessed me because of you.” He added, “Name your wages, and I will pay them.” Jacob said to him, “You know how I have worked for you and how your livestock has fared under my care. The little you had before I came has increased greatly, and the LORD has blessed you wherever I have been. But now, when may I do something for my own household?” “What shall I give you?” he asked. “Don’t give me anything,” Jacob replied. “But if you will do this one thing for me, I will go on tending your flocks and watching over them: Let me go through all your flocks today and remove from them every speckled or spotted sheep, every dark-colored lamb and every spotted or speckled goat. They will be my wages. And my honesty will testify for me in the future, whenever you check on the wages you have paid me. Any goat in my possession that is not speckled or spotted, or any

lamb that is not dark-colored, will be considered stolen” (Genesis 30:27–33).

Normally, these kinds of sheep and goats were in the minority. But God had given Jacob a dream, and in that dream he saw Laban’s flock bearing dark-colored, speckled and spotted goats and lambs. So he knew he was going to inherit the majority of the flocks if he did this. God had even told him they would be the stronger of the flock. Now because of Jacob’s superstitions, God took some rods and peeled them, making stripes on them. Whenever the strong of the flock came, he would show them the rods and put them over on his side. Whenever the weak ones of the flock came, he would not show them the rods and he would put them over on Laban’s side. Moving the strong over on his side was wise. The idea of the rod was just Jacob’s superstition. God had already determined that most of the flock would bear streaked, speckled, spotted, and dark sheep and lambs. In this way Jacob not only got the majority of Laban’s flock, but he got the strongest of Laban’s flock. The results of this are seen in Genesis 30:43: “*In this way the man grew exceedingly prosperous and came to own large flocks, and maidservants and menservants, and camels and donkeys.*” Just as Isaac had become rich in the land, now Jacob had become rich in the land. He would inherit two-thirds of all that Isaac had and all that he had gotten in his twenty years of labor in Laban’s household.

Jacob’s Return to Canaan

Genesis 31 tells of Jacob’s fleeing from Laban in order to return to Canaan. He had bargained with Laban, and now he was told by God that he must return home:

Then the LORD said to Jacob, “Go back to the land of your fathers and to your relatives, and I will be

with you.” So Jacob sent word to Rachel and Leah to come out to the fields where his flocks were. He said to them, “I see that your father’s attitude toward me is not what it was before, but the God of my father has been with me. You know that I’ve worked for your father with all my strength, yet your father has cheated me by changing my wages ten times. However, God has not allowed him to harm me” (Genesis 31:3–7).

Jacob had made the decision that he was leaving. But when he got ready to leave, Rachel did a seemingly unusual thing in Genesis 31:19–21:

When Laban had gone to shear his sheep, Rachel stole her father’s household gods. Moreover, Jacob deceived Laban the Aramean by not telling him he was running away. So he fled with all he had, and crossing the River, he headed for the hill country of Gilead.

Why did Rachel steal the household gods? It was not only because she was probably an idolater, but the gods were proof that the person holding them was the head of the house. She wanted Jacob not only to be the head of Jacob’s house but also the head of Laban’s house. Laban pursued Jacob. He was interested in kissing his daughters and his grandchildren, but he was more interested in getting the household gods back. He told Jacob that he had stolen his gods, a charge that Jacob denied. He even told Laban to search the camp and anybody who had those gods would be killed. Jacob did not know that Rachel had stolen them. Laban searched all of the tents and finally came to Rachel’s tent. Rachel had put the idols underneath the camel’s saddle, and she was sitting on the saddle with her dress draped over

it. She said, “Excuse me, father, for not getting up, but the manner of women is with me, and I cannot get up.” He searched the entire tent but did not get the chance to look at the only place where the gods were. This led Jacob to chide Laban. He claimed Laban had come out there to spy on him. Jacob said that he was going back home and that he did not have Laban’s household gods.

Laban went home, and Jacob headed for home. He was bringing idolatry to the promised land. That would have to be taken care of, but the point is that he left the promised land a person who got what he got by thievery and lying. In his uncle’s house, where he got two wives and thirteen children, he learned what it was to be lied to and what it was to be cheated. Now he was ready to be the man of God. He was the supplanter at home. He was the servant in Paddan Aram. What would he become as he came back to promised land? He would be the saint living in Hebron. He went from supplanter to servant to saint. That was Jacob’s journey. One last lesson from Jacob’s experience in that land is that God can be trusted. Amid all of the lying, all of the arguments, and all of the controversies and contests between his wives, his children, his father-in-law, and him, God was in control. He was preparing Jacob to become Israel, and the prince of God.

The Saint in Hebron

Genesis 31:1–35:29

Review and Introduction

This chapter continues the study of the life of Jacob in the Book of Genesis. It is helpful to note that there is a peculiarity in the way the Book of Genesis marks off its divisions. It will say, “These are the generations of” or “This is the account of” and then it names a particular person. As it does so, one of his sons will be the primary character in that division. Genesis 11:27 says, “*This is the account of Terah*” and Abram was the primary character during that particular period of history. Genesis 25:19 says, “*This is the account of Abraham’s son Isaac*” and Jacob, his son, was the primary character. Genesis 37:2 begins with “*This is the account of Jacob*” but continues with “*Joseph, a young man of seventeen, was tending the flocks with his brothers...*” and Joseph was the primary person in the story.

This part of the study is in the generation of Isaac, and Jacob is the main character. Two parts of Jacob’s life have been studied while he was the supplanter at home. He lived up to his name. Jacob means “one who supplants” or “one who takes the place of another.” At the beginning of his life his character was not good. He stole his brother’s birthright and his brother’s blessing. It was God’s will that Jacob have these two things, but it was not God’s will that Jacob steal them. Jacob had to leave home for twenty years because of his stealing, deception, and crookedness. He served his uncle Laban, who was his mother’s brother, for twenty years, and

Laban was of equal character to Jacob. He tricked Jacob by getting Jacob to work for seven years to get Rachel, but instead Jacob got Leah. Then he had to work seven more years to get Rachel. And finally, he had to work six years for his portion of his father-in-law's flocks. Jacob served Laban for twenty years and made Laban a rich man. Then Jacob left with a good portion of Laban's flocks, his two daughters, eleven grandsons, and one granddaughter.

That was Jacob the servant as he served Laban in Paddan Aram. He had been a supplanter, and he became a servant. Now he was going back to be the head of the house. He was going to be the spiritual leader of the seed of Abraham, the one who was going to possess all the promised land. He was going to bruise the devil's head and bless all mankind. Jacob could not do that as a supplanter. He could not do that as a servant to his father-in-law. In the third part of Jacob's life, he became the saint, the holy one, the separated one, the chosen one of God.

The Saint in Hebron

From Haran to Hebron — From Jacob to Israel

Since Jacob lived in Hebron, he could be called the "saint at Hebron." This particular lesson covers the time when the supplanter became the prince of God, when the crook became the saint. At the beginning of Genesis 32 some Bibles might have the heading, "Jacob prepares to meet Esau," but a good name for the chapter would also be "Jacob meets God." Genesis 32:1–2 says:

Jacob also went on his way, and the angels of God met him. When Jacob saw them, he said, "This is the camp of God!" So he named that place Mahanaim [which simply means "two camps"].

In this case it was his camp and God's camp. God was indicating to Jacob again that He was with him in this journey. Laban had come and kissed his children goodbye; he had searched for the household gods, but did not find them — for Rachel had hidden them — he had left to go back to Paddan Aram. Jacob, on the other hand, was going back to God's land, the promised land, and God wanted him to know he was not alone. Not only did he camp with all of his house, but God sent angels to be with Jacob so that he knew that God was going with him.

However, Jacob knew that he was going to have to meet Esau while on this journey home. Twenty years ago Esau had pledged to kill Jacob, and Jacob was still aware of Esau's profane character. Therefore, Esau would perhaps still be angry enough to kill Jacob. Jacob prepared to meet Esau by sending messengers:

Jacob sent messengers ahead of him to his brother Esau in the land of Seir, the country of Edom. He instructed them: "This is what you are to say to my master Esau [Look at the humility of Jacob]: 'Your servant Jacob says, I have been staying with Laban and have remained there till now. I have cattle and donkeys, sheep and goats, menservants and maidservants. Now I am sending this message to my lord, that I may find favor in your eyes.' " When the messengers returned to Jacob, they said, "We went to your brother Esau, and now he is coming to meet you, and four hundred men are with him" (Genesis 32:3–6).

This does not sound much like a brotherly greeting. It appeared to Jacob that Esau still intended to kill him because he was coming out with a small army to meet him. Genesis 32:7–8 continues:

In great fear and distress Jacob divided the people who were with him into two groups, and the flocks and herds and camels as well. He thought, “If Esau comes and attacks one group, the group that is left may escape.”

Jacob was prepared to meet Esau. He had tried in his own way to get Esau to come and meet him personally, but Esau might have been a little concerned about this tricky brother. Perhaps Jacob was trying to get him out into the desert to kill him. So he came with the protection of four hundred men. Then Jacob did what he should have done to start with — He prayed:

Then Jacob prayed, “O God of my father Abraham, God of my father Isaac, O LORD, who said to me, ‘Go back to your country and your relatives, and I will make you prosper,’ I am unworthy of all the kindness and faithfulness you have shown your servant [Notice his humility again]. I had only my staff when I crossed this Jordan, but now I have become two groups. Save me, I pray, from the hand of my brother Esau, for I am afraid he will come and attack me, and also the mothers with their children. But you have said, ‘I will surely make you prosper and will make your descendants like the sand of the sea, which cannot be counted’”
(Genesis 32:9–12).

Jacob not only prayed; he wanted God to remember that He had covenanted that He would prosper him, help him, and protect him:

He spent the night there, and from what he had with him he selected a gift for his brother Esau: two hundred female goats and twenty male goats, two

hundred ewes and twenty rams, thirty female camels with their young, forty cows and ten bulls, and twenty female donkeys and ten male donkeys. He put them in the care of his servants, each herd by itself, and said to his servants, “Go ahead of me, and keep some space between the herds.” He instructed the one in the lead: “When my brother Esau meets you and asks, ‘To whom do you belong, and where are you going, and who owns all these animals in front of you?’ then you are to say, ‘They belong to your servant Jacob. They are a gift sent to my lord Esau, and he is coming behind us.’” He also instructed the second, the third and all the others who followed the herds: “You are to say the same thing to Esau when you meet him” (Genesis 32:13–19).

Jacob’s servants did as they were told: “*So Jacob’s gifts went on ahead of him, but he himself spent the night in the camp*” (Genesis 32:21). He was still getting ready to meet Esau, and he was afraid. He was distressed. He not only prayed to God but he sent bribes and gifts ahead of him.

Jacob Wrestles with God

In Genesis 32:22–31 Jacob learned where the power was when he wrestled with a man whom he later believed to be God:

That night Jacob got up and took his two wives, his two maidservants and his eleven sons and crossed the ford of the Jabbok [The Jabbok is a little river that flows into the Jordan, a little over half way between the Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea]. After he had sent them across the stream, he sent over all

his possessions. So Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled with him till daybreak. When the man saw that he could not overpower him, he touched the socket of Jacob's hip so that his hip was wrenched as he wrestled with the man. Then the man said, "Let me go, for it is daybreak." But Jacob replied, "I will not let you go unless you bless me." The man asked him, "What is your name?" "Jacob," he answered. Then the man said, "Your name will no longer be Jacob, but Israel [one who has power with God] because you have struggled with God, and with men and have overcome" (Genesis 32:22–28).

There was a name change because there was a character change. A proud, young crook left the promised land, but a mature, righteous man had come back. But Jacob had a question on his mind. Genesis 32:29–30 says:

Jacob said, "Please tell me your name." But he replied, "Why do you ask my name?" Then he blessed him there. So Jacob called the place Peniel [which means the "face of God"], saying, "It is because I saw God face to face, and yet my life was spared."

In theological terms this is what is called a theophany, which means "God in a human form." God had come down and as a man had wrestled with Jacob all night long. Now the day had come:

The sun rose above him as he passed Peniel, and he was limping because of his hip. Therefore to this day, the Israelites do not eat the tendon attached to the socket of the hip, because the socket of Jacob's hip was touched near the tendon (Genesis 32:31).

In Jacob's day, in Moses' day, and even today, the tendon of the hip socket of an animal is not kosher and cannot be eaten. It is to remind the nation of Israel that God is Jehovah. He is the one who is to be honored.

Now Jacob met Esau. The two brothers were back together:

Jacob looked up and there was Esau, coming with his four hundred men; so he divided the children among Leah, Rachel and the two maidservants. He put the maidservants and their children in front, Leah and her children next, and Rachel and Joseph in the rear. [That seemed to be the order in which he loved these people.] He himself went on ahead [The old Jacob would have gotten behind them all and hidden. Israel went ahead of them.] and bowed down to the ground seven times as he approached his brother (Genesis 33:1–3).

Note Jacob's humility and changed character. This time he was not trying to gain something from Esau; he was trying to be acceptable to him. The years that Jacob had been away from Esau had turned the dagger in Esau's hand to a kiss from Esau's lips: “*But Esau ran to meet Jacob and embraced him; he threw his arms around his neck and kissed him. And they wept*” (Genesis 33:4). There was reconciliation. Esau had probably learned through the years that he was as much to blame for what happened to him as Jacob was. His profane nature and Jacob's crooked nature worked together to get the will of God done. Jacob had the blessing of Abraham, and he had the birthright of Abraham.

Now it was time for Jacob's family to honor Esau:

Then Esau looked up and saw the women and children. “Who are these with you?” he asked. Jacob answered, “They are the children God has

graciously given your servant. Then the maidservants and their children approached and bowed down. Next, Leah and her children came and bowed down. Last of all came Joseph and Rachel, and they too bowed down" (Genesis 33:5–7).

Again notice Jacob's humility. He was even honoring God: This is all recorded for the reader to understand that the promise God had made when these two boys were in the womb — that the elder would serve the younger — definitely spoke not of the two boys, but of the two nations.

Esau now wanted to know why Jacob sent all of the animals before he arrived:

Esau asked, "What do you mean by all these droves I met?" "To find favor in your eyes, my lord," he said. But Esau said, "I already have plenty, my brother. Keep what you have for yourself." "No, please!" said Jacob. "If I have found favor in your eyes, accept this gift from me. For to see your face is like seeing the face of God, now that you have received me favorably. Please accept the present that was brought to you, for God has been gracious to me and I have all I need." And because Jacob insisted, Esau accepted it (Genesis 33:8–11).

When God wrestled with Jacob He was getting him ready for this day so that he could look upon his brother not as someone to trick, to deceive or to rob, but as if he were God Himself. Esau accepted the gift because he knew that it was truly a gift and not a bribe. In return, Esau offered to stay with Jacob for the remainder of the journey:

Then Esau said, "Let us be on our way; I'll accompany you." But Jacob said to him, "My lord knows that the children are tender and that I must

care for the ewes and cows that are nursing their young. If they are driven hard just one day, all the animals will die. So let my lord go on ahead of his servant, while I move along slowly at the pace of the droves before me and that of the children, until I come to my lord in Seir." Esau said, "Then let me leave some of my men with you." "But why do that?" Jacob asked. "Just let me find favor in the eyes of my lord." So that day Esau started on his way back to Seir. Jacob, however, went to Succoth, where he built a place for himself and made shelters for his livestock. That is why the place is called Succoth (Genesis 33:12–17).

Jacob at Shechem

Jacob finally got back into the promised land. Genesis 33:18 says Jacob settled in Shechem. Remember what had happened to Jacob so far. He had left his father-in-law behind. He had learned that God was with him because he saw the angels. He had learned that he was the prince of God. He had power with God as his name was changed from Jacob to Israel. He had humbled himself before Esau, whom earlier he had deceived, defrauded, and robbed. The two brothers had been reconciled, and now Jacob was going to be settling again in the promised land:

After Jacob came from Paddan Aram, he arrived safely at the city of Shechem in Canaan and camped within sight of the city. For a hundred pieces of silver, he bought from the sons of Hamor, the father of Shechem, the plot of ground where he pitched his tent. There he set up an altar and called it El Elohe Israel (Genesis 33:18–20).

This is the first time it is mentioned that Jacob set up an altar. Abraham always did it as soon as he arrived at a new

location. Jacob had now become Israel, the son of Abraham, so he set up an altar and called it “*El Elohe Israel*,” which means “the mighty one,” the mighty God of Israel.

The Shechemites had a man there named Shechem, the son of Hamor the Hivite, and he looked at Dinah, the daughter of Jacob, and he loved her. The text says in Genesis 34:2–4:

When Shechem son of Hamor the Hivite, the ruler of that area, saw her, he took her and violated her. His heart was drawn to Dinah daughter of Jacob, and he loved the girl and spoke tenderly to her. And Shechem said to his father Hamor, “Get me this girl as my wife.”

Shechem had done a foul and evil deed; there is no doubt about that. But he did it out of love and not lust. It was not just a sexual thing; he wanted this lady to be his wife. Jacob heard that his daughter had been defiled, and he kept it to himself until his sons came in from the field, and he told them. The father of Shechem, Hamor, came and said “... ‘My son Shechem has his heart set on your daughter. Please give her to him as his wife’” (Genesis 34:8). He was saying, “Let him have her as his wife, and I will give you anything you ask for a bridal gift. All of this land that is before you can be yours. I want my son to marry your daughter.” Jacob’s thoughts are not recorded, but his sons’ thoughts are. His sons were still incensed in their pride that their sister had been violated, so, acting deceitfully, they said to Hamor:

... “We can’t do such a thing; we can’t give our sister to a man who is not circumcised. That would be a disgrace to us. We will give our consent to you on one condition only: that you become like us by circumcising all your males” (Genesis 34:14–15).

Jacob's sons demanded that all of the males of the land — not just Shechem, the son of Hamor, but all of the males of the land — be circumcised. Only then could Dinah become Shechem's wife. The sons had no intention of honoring that agreement at all. But it seemed good to the people, so all the males of the land were circumcised. On the third day, while the men were still sore and weak, Simeon and Levi, two of Jacob's sons, took their swords and attacked the city, killing every single male in the city and country. Then they took their wives and daughters as slaves. They took their flocks and their herds as perhaps what they would think would be right for Dinah's being defiled. When Jacob heard of this, he was terribly angry. He called his two sons in and said:

... “You have brought trouble on me by making me a stench to the Canaanites and Perizzites, the people living in this land. We are few in number, and if they join forces against me and attack me, I and my household will be destroyed” (Genesis 34:30).

But the brothers very haughtily said in Genesis 34:31
“... ‘Should he have treated our sister like a prostitute?’”
The answer to that question is “No,” but the question is, had Shechem treated Dinah like a prostitute? There is no justifying what Shechem did because what he did was a foul and terrible deed, but he did not treat her like a prostitute. He did not just walk away and leave her bleeding. He did not put some money down in front of her and walk away. He pledged himself. He pleaded for her to be his wife. Of course, he had done wrong, but he wanted to do the best he could with the wrong he had done, and he deeply loved this girl.

In Genesis 35 Jacob returned to Bethel, which is where he received the vision of the angels ascending and

descending on a ladder. When he received that vision from God, he had told God that if God would be with him, he would come back here and pay a tithe. Jacob did exactly that in Genesis 35:1–7. He did what he had promised he would do.

On the way back to Hebron from Bethel, Rachel was giving birth to a child. She was in terrible pain and about to die as the child was being born. The maid who was there said, “*Don’t be afraid, for you have another son*” (Genesis 35:17). Rachel had called her first son Joseph but had pleaded for another son. But as she was giving birth she was dying, so she named the son Benoni, which means the “son of my sorrow.” Jacob would have none of that so he said call his name, Benjamin, which means “the son of my right hand.” On his right hand was where Rachel had always walked, and he wanted this son to walk where his mother had walked.

There were eleven sons born outside the promised land and one child born in the promised land. Rachel died and was buried, and to the day, as Moses wrote in the Book of Genesis, the place of her burial was known. But another interesting thing occurred in Genesis 35. In Genesis 35:22 Reuben committed adultery with his father’s concubine, Bilhah, and Israel (Jacob) heard of it. Why is that mentioned? Genesis 49 shows why this was discussed. Jacob remembered that Reuben did this when he was blessing his sons, so Reuben received an unfavorable blessing. Nothing is mentioned that is not significant whether in the context in which it is found or in a later context.

Jacob was now living in Hebron. His twelve sons are listed in Genesis 35:23–26, and in Genesis 35:27–29 the death of Isaac is recorded:

Jacob came home to his father Isaac in Mamre, near Kiriath Arba (that is, Hebron), where Abraham and Isaac had stayed. Isaac lived a

hundred and eighty years. Then he breathed his last and died and was gathered to his people, old and full of years. And his sons Esau and Jacob buried him.

Jacob was born when Isaac was sixty years old. That means that Jacob was now 120 years old at the close of Genesis 35. Genesis 36 outlines Esau's descendants. That really has no bearing on this study with the exception of a significant statement in Genesis 36:43, "...*This was Esau the father of the Edomites.*"

Jacob lived in the land where his father had stayed, the land of Canaan. Jacob occupied Canaan, and just south of it was the country of Edom, which was the territory that Esau occupied. There is one more incident in Jacob's life recorded in Genesis 46–50. What happened between Genesis 36–46? Genesis 37:1–2 says:

Jacob lived in the land where his father had stayed, the land of Canaan. This is the account of Jacob. Joseph, a young man of seventeen, was tending the flocks with his brothers, the sons of Bilhah and the sons of Zilpah, his father's wives, and he brought their father a bad report about them.

"*This is the account of Jacob.*" but it is the story of one of Jacob's son (Genesis 37:2). This is the story of Joseph. When Jacob went to Egypt years later, Jacob was there to stand before Pharaoh and bless him. He was there to stand before Manasseh and Ephraim, two of Joseph's sons, and to bless them. He was also there to stand before his twelve sons and bless them and stand before Jehovah and be blessed by God at the end of his life.

This is a beautiful story to read and think about: Jacob, the one who had started out as the deceiver, had become the one who was the humble and blessed servant of God. The

lessons Christians can learn here is that our lives, no matter how we start out, no matter what wickedness or deception we practice at the beginning of our life, we need to find our day with God and wrestle with Him until our name is changed to Israel, the one who in striving has power with God.

The Account of Joseph (1)

Genesis 37–39

Introduction

This chapter begins a study of one of the most interesting people in the Book of Genesis. Joseph, in many ways, is even more interesting than Abraham, Isaac or Jacob. Joseph was a hero. He was a star; but like most men of God he did not start out that way. It takes a while for God to mold a man into what he ought to be. Abram had to undergo some experiences before God changed his name and he became Abraham. Jacob had to go through a lot of difficulties and trials in order to be named Israel. And for Joseph to be the preserver of his people, he also had to undergo some very serious trials.

Joseph, the Princely Son

The Preeminent Son of Jacob

Joseph's life will be divided into sections, just as Jacob's was. The first part of Joseph's life will be called the "Princely Son," since in his father's house he was the prince among his brothers. Notice there is a new start in Genesis 37:2 because it says, "*This is the account of Jacob,*" or as the King James Version says, "*These are the generations of Jacob.*" When Genesis uses those phrases, the son is the star. Jacob was no longer the primary character. His day was over, and Joseph became the preeminent son of Jacob:

This is the account of Jacob. Joseph, a young man of seventeen, was tending the flocks with his brothers, the sons of Bilhah and the sons of Zilpah, his father's wives, and he brought their father a bad report about them (Genesis 37:2).

The sons of Leah were not involved in this, because they were not tending the flock. Joseph was a tattle-tale, and it did not make him popular at all as he brought a report of the brothers's foolishness and evil ways. This was reason number one why his brothers hated him. Genesis 37:3 continues, “*Now Israel loved Joseph more than any of his other sons, because he had been born to him in his old age; and he made a richly ornamented robe for him.*” The King James Version says, “*Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age: and he made him a coat of many colours.*” The idea is that this was a special coat, a coat that no one else had. This also did not sit well with Joseph’s brothers:

When his brothers saw that their father loved him more than any of them [They could see this in the coat as well as in their father’s favoritism], they hated him and could not speak a kind word to him (Genesis 37:4).

The fact that Jacob was showing favoritism to Joseph made his brothers take it out on Joseph. That was the second reason his brothers hated him. He was his father’s favorite. Jacob was prejudiced. Yet the main reason Joseph’s brothers hated him was his pride. It would be hard not to be proud, though, would it not? Joseph had a dream. He could not help having a dream because it was from God, but Joseph told it to his brothers, which he did not have to do. He could have

kept it to himself. Why did he tell this dream to his brothers? Genesis 37:5–7 says:

Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers, they hated him all the more. He said to them, “Listen to this dream I had: We were binding sheaves of grain out in the field when suddenly my sheaf rose and stood upright, while your sheaves gathered around mine and bowed down to it.”

Joseph was saying that not only was he Jacob's favorite but he was also favored by God, and that made him superior to his brothers:

His brothers said to him, “Do you intend to reign over us? Will you actually rule us?” And they hated him all the more because of his dream and what he had said (Genesis 37:8).

God wanted Joseph to know that he was going to be preeminent, or He would not have given him the dream, but He did not want Joseph to tell it to the brothers. This was Joseph's pride.

Then Joseph had another dream, and he told it to his brothers. It seems as if Joseph were rubbing their noses in it:

Then he had another dream, and he told it to his brothers. “Listen,” he said, “I had another dream, and this time the sun and moon and eleven stars were bowing down to me.” When he told his father as well as his brothers, his father rebuked him and said, “What is this dream you had? Will your mother and I and your brothers actually come and bow down to the ground before you?” His brothers

were jealous of him, but his father kept the matter in mind (Genesis 37:9–11).

Why would Jacob keep this matter in mind? Could it be that Jacob had also had dreams? Of course he had. At Bethel and Paddan Aram he had dreams. Had they all come to pass? Every single dream that God gave Jacob had come to pass. So Jacob knew that God gave dreams, and Jacob knew that God brought those dream to pass.

Regardless, Joseph was hated. Why? Number one, he told. Number two, he was loved more than the others. Number three, he was proud. What does pride go before? “*Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall*” (Proverbs 16:18). Joseph was on his way to a fall. He was going to be sold into slavery by his own brothers. Joseph’s pride in telling his brothers about his dreams was the reason for their hatred. Notice the results of that hatred:

Now his brothers had gone to graze their father's flocks near Shechem, and Israel said to Joseph, "As you know, your brothers are grazing the flocks near Shechem. Come, I am going to send you to them."
“*Very well,*” he replied. So he said to him, “*Go and see if all is well with your brothers and with the flocks, and bring word back to me.*” Then he sent him off from the Valley of Hebron ... (Genesis 37:12–14).

Joseph was not out with his brothers keeping the flock, and it is important for this story that he was not.

...When Joseph arrived at Shechem, a man found him wandering around in the fields and asked him, “What are you looking for?” He replied, “I'm looking for my brothers. Can you tell me where they

are grazing their flocks?" "They have moved on from here," the man answered. "I heard them say, 'Let's go to Dothan'" So Joseph went after his brothers and found them near Dothan. But they saw him in the distance, and before he reached them, they plotted to kill him.[That was one way to get rid of the competition. Esau had tried that with Jacob. The brothers wanted to try it with Joseph.] "Here comes that dreamer!" they said to each other. "Come now, let's kill him and throw him into one of these cisterns and say that a ferocious animal devoured him. Then we'll see what comes of his dreams." [One brother did not want that to happen.] When Reuben heard this, he tried to rescue him from their hands. "Let's not take his life," he said. "Don't shed any blood. Throw him into this cistern here in the desert, but don't lay a hand on him." Reuben said this to rescue him from them and take him back to his father (Genesis 37:14–22).

Dothan was over near the coast of the Mediterranean Sea. They had probably run out of pasture land for the flocks, so they had moved on to Dothan.

Reuben did not want to see the sorrow and mourning that would take place in Jacob's life if Joseph were to die:

So when Joseph came to his brothers, they stripped him of his robe [He had flaunted that robe in their presence] — the richly ornamented robe he was wearing — and they took him and threw him into the cistern. Now the cistern was empty; there was no water in it. As they sat down to eat their meal, they looked up and saw a caravan of Ishmaelites coming from Gilead. Their camels were loaded with

spices, balm and myrrh, and they were on their way to take them down to Egypt (Genesis 37:23–25).

These traders were descended from Ishmael, the older son of Abraham and the older brother to Isaac. Ishmael's descendants had already become large enough that there was a nation called Ishmael. They would also be called Midianites in this same chapter because that was their geographical location.

One of the other brothers came up with an idea now that these traders were approaching:

Judah said to his brothers, “What will we gain if we kill our brother and cover up his blood? Come, let’s sell him to the Ishmaelites and not lay our hands on him; after all, he is our brother, our own flesh and blood.” His brothers agreed (Genesis 37:26–27).

This kind of morality is difficult to understand — a morality that would not allow Judah to kill his brother but the kind of morality that enabled him to sell Joseph into slavery not knowing what would happen to him at the end of that journey:

So when the Midianite merchants came by, his brothers pulled Joseph up out of the cistern and sold him for twenty shekels of silver to the Ishmaelites, who took him to Egypt (Genesis 37:28).

A shekel was worth a month's wage. So over a year and a half's wage was what they got for their brother:

When Reuben returned to the cistern and saw that Joseph was not there, he tore his clothes. [He did

not know what all transpired while he was gone.]

He went back to his brothers and said, “The boy isn’t there! Where can I turn now?” (Genesis 37:29–30).

There is no record that they ever told Reuben what they had done, but since the act of selling Joseph to the Ishmaelites had been carried out, a new plan was devised, this one aimed at deceiving their father, Jacob:

Then they got Joseph’s robe, slaughtered a goat and dipped the robe in the blood. They took the ornamented robe back to their father and said, “We found this. Examine it to see whether it is your son’s robe.” He recognized it and said, “It is my son’s robe! Some ferocious animal has devoured him. Joseph has surely been torn to pieces” (Genesis 37:31–33).

That is tragic! It is morose that here were at least ten of Jacob’s sons letting their father believe this lie that Joseph was dead. Proverbs 16:18 says, “*Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall.*” Jacob mourned:

Then Jacob tore his clothes, put on sackcloth and mourned for his son many days. All his sons and daughters came to comfort him, but he refused to be comforted. “No,” he said, “in mourning will I go down to the grave to my son.” So his father wept for him. Meanwhile, the Midianites sold Joseph in Egypt to Potiphar, one of Pharaoh’s officials, the captain of the guard (Genesis 37:34–36).

But why did the brothers hate Joseph? Let’s review here. They hated Joseph because he told their father about the evil

they had been doing. They hated him because of the favoritism that Jacob showed him, which Joseph accepted. They hated him because of his pride that caused him to tell his dreams that showed that he was going to be superior not only to his brothers but also to his father and his mother. What was the result of that hatred? Joseph was sold as a slave into Egypt. Joseph had to inherit the consequences of his pride. The rest of the story came out all right; God's story always does, but right now it was a tragedy. One brother had been sold to Egypt into slavery; a father was tearing his clothes and mourning over the situation, and the rest of the sons were letting him do it. Surely after a month or two, the brothers would feel terribly guilty about how they had dishonored their father.

Look at a redemptive sidelight. Consider how the story goes all the way back to Genesis 3:15. In Genesis 3:15 God said that the seed of the woman — singular seed — would bruise the devil's head. Now there were twelve families in Jacob's family. In Genesis 49 the family of Judah would be selected to be the family through whom the seed was traced. A lion, a single person, out of Judah's family would arise to defeat the devil, to bless all mankind, and to carry on Abraham's seed. Genesis 38 relates the story of Judah's family line to continue the record of the ones who would trace this seed from Adam all the way to Christ. This is also an interesting sidelight into the morality of the children or the lack of morality. Judah might have been the best son, other than Joseph, and he was flawed. Joseph was the best of Jacob's children, and even he had his flaws. At the very best, man is what? Man is flawed! At the very best, we cannot be saved based on who we are because we are so flawed.

The Incident of Judah and Tamar

The Birth of Er and His Marriage to Tamar

Genesis 38:1–8 tells the story of Judah and Tamar:

At that time, Judah left his brothers and went down to stay with a man of Adullam named Hirah. There Judah met the daughter of a Canaanite man named Shua. [He was marrying outside the chosen line. He was marrying a Canaanite, and it would influence him.] He married her and lay with her; she became pregnant and gave birth to a son, who was named Er. She conceived again and gave birth to a son and named him Onan. She gave birth to still another son and named him Shelah. It was at Kezib that she gave birth to him. Judah got a wife for Er, his firstborn, and her name was Tamar. [Tamar became Judah's daughter-in-law.] But Er, Judah's firstborn, was wicked in the LORD'S sight; so the LORD put him to death. [It is not known how the LORD killed him, but the LORD put Er to death.] Then Judah said to Onan, "Lie with your brother's wife and fulfill your duty to her as a brother-in-law to produce offspring for your brother."

This is one of the laws that God included in the Law of Moses. It is called levirate marriage. If a man died, his brother must take his wife and conceive a son to raise up children to him. After that the children would be the brother's, but the firstborn of the deceased man's was his son and carried on his line. One wicked son died, and Judah gave his second son. The wickedness of his sons was testimony that Judah should not have married this Canaanite woman:

But Onan knew that the offspring would not be his; so whenever he lay with his brother's wife, he spilled his semen on the ground to keep from producing offspring for his brother. What he did was wicked in the LORD's sight; so he put him to death also (Genesis 38:9–10).

Once again, how God killed Onan is not stated, but He killed the man. This is not a passage about birth control. This is a passage about not obeying God. God wanted that second son to raise up a child for the first son. He refused to do the will of God.

Tamar's Scheme

Judah had only one more son:

Judah then said to his daughter-in-law Tamar, "Live as a widow in your father's house until my son Shelah grows up." For he thought, "He may die too, just like his brothers." So Tamar went to live in her father's house. After a long time Judah's wife, the daughter of Shua, died. When Judah had recovered from his grief, he went up to Timnah, to the men who were shearing his sheep, and his friend Hirah the Adullamite went with him. When Tamar was told, "Your father-in-law is on his way to Timnah to shear his sheep," she took off her widow's clothes, covered herself with a veil to disguise herself, and then sat down at the entrance to Enaim, which is on the road to Timnah. For she saw that, though Shelah had now grown up, she had not been given to him as his wife (Genesis 39:11–14).

Judah was not keeping his word. He was a whole lot like his father Jacob. He was deceiving the girl:

When Judah saw her, he thought she was a prostitute, for she had covered her face. Not realizing that she was his daughter-in-law, he went over to her by the roadside and said, “Come now, let me sleep with you.” “And what will you give me to sleep with you?” she asked. “I’ll send you a young goat from my flock,” he said. “Will you give me something as a pledge until you send it?” she asked. He said, “What pledge should I give you?” “Your seal and its cord, and the staff in your hand,” she answered. So he gave them to her and slept with her, and she became pregnant by him. After she left, she took off her veil and put on her widow’s clothes again (Genesis 38:15–19).

Neither Judah nor Tamar was the moral, upright person one would expect God to use to bring the seed line into effect, to bring His Son into the world to save all the world. God uses what He has, but this does reflect on the moral standard of that land. Judah should have still been back with his brothers in the promised land, living with them. If he had been with them he would not have endured such agony. He had been affected by living among the Canaanite people to the point that he went to a prostitute. His daughter-in-law, being a Canaanite, was setting Judah up for the fall.

Tamar’s Vindication

Genesis 38:20–21 says:

Meanwhile Judah sent the young goat by his friend the Adullamite in order to get his pledge back from the woman, but he did not find her. He asked the

men who lived there, “Where is the shrine prostitute ...” (Genesis 38:20–21).

That is an interesting statement, but it was made because the religion in Canaan was Baal worship. Baal was the god of fertility, and so one of the rites was that they finished their worship to Baal by committing adultery or fornication with a temple prostitute, be it a male or a female:

“...who was beside the road at Enaim?” “There hasn’t been any shrine prostitute here,” they said. So he went back to Judah and said, “I didn’t find her. Besides, the men who lived there said, ‘There hasn’t been any shrine prostitute here.’” Then Judah said, “Let her keep what she has, or we will become a laughingstock. After all, I did send her this young goat, but you didn’t find her.” About three months later Judah was told, “Your daughter-in-law Tamar is guilty of prostitution, and as a result she is now pregnant.” Judah said, “Bring her out and have her burned to death!” As she was being brought out, she sent a message to her father-in-law. “I am pregnant by the man who owns these,” she said. And she added, “See if you recognize whose seal and cord and staff these are.” Judah recognized them and said, “She is more righteous than I, since I wouldn’t give her to my son Shelah.” And he did not sleep with her again (Genesis 38:21–26).

The Birth of Perez and Zerah

Judah did not take her to be his wife, but her son was going to be in the lineage of Jesus. Genesis 38:27 continues with the birth of the two sons:

When the time came for her to give birth, there were twin boys in her womb. As she was giving birth, one of them put out his hand; so the midwife took a scarlet thread and tied it on his wrist and said, “This one came out first.” But when he drew back his hand, his brother came out, and she said, “So this is how you have broken out!” And he was named Perez [which means “breaking out”]. Then his brother, who had the scarlet thread on his wrist, came out and he was given the name Zerah [which means “scarlet” or “brightness”] (Genesis 38:27–30).

Perez was in the lineage of Christ. So in the lineage of Christ is the result of this immoral relationship between Judah and Tamar. God uses strange instruments to get His will done. The reason for studying this chapter is not to imply that Judah and Tamar were lost but simply to show that they were flawed. There were no unflawed people in the seed line of Christ until the unflawed Son of God was born. All men are just like Judah and Tamar. We are here because of God's will. We are in God's covenant, and we are being used by God as the seed of the woman to carry out the will of God on earth. But you and I are flawed. We need to realize that at our very best we are not who we ought to be.

God was fulfilling His promise. He had said that there would be a seed and that the seed would continue until finally One would come to destroy the devil and to bruise his head, and whatever had to happen for that to be fulfilled would happen. It must be Judah's line. It would not be Judah's line through Shua, his wife, but it would be Judah's line through Tamar, his daughter-in-law. Do not forget Joseph. Joseph's story paused in Genesis 37 after he had been sold into slavery in Egypt. This redemptive sidelight with Judah was inserted here, but do not forget Joseph, for

Joseph's story continued in Egypt where he was no longer the princely son but the patient sufferer in Potiphar's house and in Potiphar's prison.

The Account of Joseph (2)

Genesis 39–41:40

Review and Introduction

This study of Old Testament history is nearing the end of the Book of Genesis. As was said in the last chapter, Joseph's life is one of the most interesting stories in all of the Old Testament. First, Joseph was the princely son. At home he was his father's pride and joy. He was his father's favorite. He curried his father's favor by tattling on his brothers when they did wrong. His father indicated his prejudice and his superior love for Joseph by giving him a unique coat. It was a coat richly ornamented, or a coat of many colors. Joseph manifested his pride by telling his family the dreams that God gave him, dreams that promised Joseph superiority and preeminence in the family. He told those dreams to his brothers and then to his father and mother, and the whole family was upset with him because of his prideful claim to be superior to them. His brothers were filled with such jealousy that they sold him into Egyptian captivity. They sold him to a passing band of Ishmaelites from Midian, who sold him into the house of Potiphar, who was the captain of Pharaoh's house.

Joseph, the Patient Sufferer

Joseph — God's Man in Potiphar's House

Genesis 39:1 begins the study of Joseph as the patient sufferer. Notice in this first verse something that later on will help explain why the Egyptians, who detested

shepherds, made a shepherd prime minister and a shepherd nation preeminent within their nation:

Now Joseph had been taken down to Egypt. Potiphar, an Egyptian who was one of Pharaoh's officials, the captain of the guard, bought him from the Ishmaelites who had taken him there (Genesis 39:1).

Would not the reader expect the captain of the Egyptian guard to be an Egyptian? Why does it say, “...*Potiphar, an Egyptian who was one of Pharaoh's officials, the captain of the guard...*”? Suppose the Pharaoh was not an Egyptian. There were periods in Egypt’s history when they were ruled by foreign kings, and this was one of those times. There will be other indications of this during this study. This even helps to date the time when Joseph was in Egypt. But Joseph was sold to the second-in-command in all of the land. The captain of the guard means the captain of the inner guard. He was the captain of the guard who was responsible for Pharaoh’s safety. Pharaoh means “great house.” His was the great house, and so the person who ruled that great house was called “great house” (Pharaoh). But Potiphar was the second-in-command, the captain of the guard. He was an Egyptian man who was trusted completely by a non-Egyptian who sat on the throne. It will be seen later that Pharaoh did not detest shepherds, but Egyptians did.

What did the LORD do with Joseph in Potiphar’s house? Notice Genesis 39:2, “*The LORD was with Joseph and he prospered, and he lived in the house of his Egyptian master.*” God was telling Joseph, “I’m with you. I know it was your pride that brought you here; I know it was your brothers’ prejudice that brought you here, but I want you to know that I came here with you. I didn’t stay in the promised land.” Of course, a point was made here. God is

omnipresent; He is everywhere. But He said, “I didn’t leave you alone. I’ve come with you, and I’m prospering you in Potiphar’s house.”

Genesis 39:3–4 says:

When his master saw that the LORD was with him and that the LORD gave him success in everything he did, Joseph found favor in his eyes and became his attendant. [The word “attendant” would be better translated “steward.”] Potiphar put him in charge of his household, and he entrusted to his care everything he owned.

He was lord of Potiphar’s household. He was in control of everything that Potiphar had. Genesis 39:5–6 continues:

From the time he put him in charge of his household and of all that he owned, the LORD blessed the household of the Egyptian because of Joseph. The blessing of the LORD was on everything Potiphar had, both in the house and in the field. So he left in Joseph’s care everything he had; with Joseph in charge, he did not concern himself with anything except the food he ate ...

Potiphar had everything going his way. All of his goods were prospering, and all of his flocks were increasing. He did not have to worry about anything. He went home; he sat down at the table; he ate; he had total confidence that Joseph was doing everything that needed to be done, but then trouble came. Everything had been going well. Joseph had been blessed, but the seed was not going to be able to be preserved with him as the steward of Potiphar’s house. That was not a significant enough position for Joseph to hold for God’s will to be done. So God was going to use the lust of

an immoral wife to fulfill His purpose, Potiphar's wife. The scene was now set. As God had used Tamar and Judah's lust to fulfill His purpose, He used Joseph, "*...Now Joseph was well-built and handsome, and after a while his master's wife took notice of Joseph and said, 'Come to bed with me!'*" (Genesis 39:6–7). Here was a good looking, young man, and she wanted to have him, but he refused. Notice the words he used. He used the magic word "no." That word is hard to misunderstand, is it not? Joseph said "No," but then he gave the reason he said "no":

But he refused. "With me in charge," he told her, "my master does not concern himself with anything in the house; everything he owns he has entrusted to my care. No one is greater in this house than I am. My master has withheld nothing from me except you, because you are his wife. How then could I do such a wicked thing and sin against God?" (Genesis 39:8–9).

Notice that Joseph did not ask how he could sin against Potiphar, his master. He said, "*'How then could I do such a wicked thing and sin against God?'*" Joseph was able to say, "No" because, first, he was not that kind of man. Second, he had the trust and responsibility that his master had given him, and third, he was a man of God. He knew God was watching his actions. He would not sleep with Potiphar's wife because it would be a sin against God. Genesis 39:10 says, "*And though she spoke to Joseph day after day, he refused to go to bed with her or even be with her.*"

Notice that Joseph tried never to be alone with this woman because she was constantly after him to commit fornication with her. But even with his best efforts:

One day he went into the house to attend to his duties, and none of the household servants was inside. She caught him by his cloak and said, “Come to bed with me!” But he left his cloak in her hand and ran out of the house (Genesis 39:11–12).

Joseph may have been afraid that he might give in to her. After all, when the temptation becomes great, that is the time to run. The Bible says:

Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body. What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? (1 Corinthians 6:18–19, KJV).

The New International Version says, “*Flee from sexual immorality.*” When Paul wrote to Timothy, he said, “*Flee the evil desires of youth ...*” (2 Timothy 2:22). The Bible says “run from sin.” Here was a young man who knew the lust that was within him, and he knew that to stay there and to remain with that woman, with her insistence that they commit adultery together, he would have to be in bed with her. So he ran, leaving his cloak in her hand.

“Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned” (William Congreve, 1670–1729). Genesis 39:13–15 seems to say that this was true:

When she saw that he had left his cloak in her hand and had run out of the house, she called her household servants. “Look,” she said to them, “this Hebrew has been brought to us to make sport of us! He came in here to sleep with me, but I screamed.

When he heard me scream for help, he left his cloak beside me and ran out of the house. ”

Potiphar's wife was lying, of course, but the woman had been scorned, so she tattled on Joseph just as Joseph had tattled on his brothers. The difference was that Joseph had been telling the truth and this woman was not. He was steward of Potiphar's house. He was tempted by Potiphar's wife, and now he was being framed by Potiphar's wife. Genesis 39:19 says: “*When his master heard the story his wife told him, saying, ‘This is how your slave treated me,’ he burned with anger.*” Was Potiphar angry because he believed her? It could very well be that he did not believe her. If he had believed her, what would have happened to Joseph? Potiphar would have killed him. But instead, he put Joseph in a prison in Potiphar's house. He put him in the prison where the captain of the guard's prisoners were kept. So it was not that Potiphar believed his wife, but rather, he could have been angry because he was losing the steward of his house. He was losing the one who had multiplied his goods.

Joseph — God's Man in Potiphar's Prison

But Potiphar must do something to Joseph. Genesis 39:20 says, “*Joseph's master took him and put him in prison, the place where the king's prisoners were confined ...*” Joseph was in Potiphar's house. He had been a steward; he had been tempted; he had been framed, and now he was in prison. But God did not forget Joseph; He followed Joseph into prison! He had followed Joseph into Potiphar's house and followed him into prison:

...But while Joseph was there in the prison, the LORD was with him; he showed him kindness and granted him favor in the eyes of the prison warden.

So the warden put Joseph in charge of all those held in the prison, and he was made responsible for all that was done there. The warden paid no attention to anything under Joseph's care, because the LORD was with Joseph and gave him success in whatever he did (Genesis 39:20–23).

Joseph had been lord of Potiphar's house, and now he was lord of Potiphar's prison. Here is a look into Potiphar's prison:

Some time later, the cupbearer and the baker of the king of Egypt offended their master, the king of Egypt. Pharaoh was angry with his two officials, the chief cupbearer and the chief baker, and put them in custody in the house of the captain of the guard, in the same prison where Joseph was confined" (Genesis 40:1–3).

Notice that, "*The captain of the guard assigned them to Joseph, and he attended them...*" (Genesis 40:4). Potiphar still trusted Joseph. It does not seem like he believed that Joseph tried to sleep with his wife.

These two men each had a dream, and Joseph was called upon to interpret those dreams:

...After they had been in custody for some time, each of the two men — the cupbearer and the baker of the king of Egypt, who were being held in prison — had a dream the same night, and each dream had a meaning of its own. When Joseph came to them the next morning, he saw that they were dejected. So he asked Pharaoh's officials who were in custody with him in his master's house, "Why are your faces so sad today?" "We both had dreams,"

they answered, “but there is no one to interpret them.” Then Joseph said to them, “Do not interpretations belong to God? Tell me your dreams.” So the chief cupbearer told Joseph his dream. He said to him, “In my dream I saw a vine in front of me, and on the vine were three branches. As soon as it budded, it blossomed, and its clusters ripened into grapes. Pharaoh’s cup was in my hand, and I took the grapes, squeezed them into Pharaoh’s cup and put the cup in his hand.” “This is what it means,” Joseph said to him. “The three branches are three days. Within three days Pharaoh will lift up your head and restore you to your position, and you will put Pharaoh’s cup in his hand, just as you used to do when you were his cupbearer. But when all goes well with you, remember me and show me kindness; mention me to Pharaoh and get me out of this prison. For I was forcibly carried off from the land of the Hebrews, and even here I have done nothing to deserve being put in a dungeon.” When the chief baker saw that Joseph had given a favorable interpretation, he said to Joseph, “I too had a dream: On my head were three baskets of bread. In the top basket were all kinds of baked goods for Pharaoh, but the birds were eating them out of the basket on my head.” “This is what it means,” Joseph said. “The three baskets are three days. Within three days Pharaoh will lift off your head and hang you on a tree. And the birds will eat away your flesh.” Now the third day was Pharaoh’s birthday, and he gave a feast for all his officials. He lifted up the heads of the chief cupbearer and the chief baker in the presence of his officials: He restored the chief cupbearer to his position, so that he once again put the cup into

Pharaoh’s hand, but he hanged the chief baker, just as Joseph had said to them in his interpretation. The chief cupbearer, however, did not remember Joseph; he forgot him (Genesis 40:4–23).

What if the cupbearer had remembered Joseph? What if he had told Pharaoh about Joseph? What if Pharaoh really wanted to honor the cupbearer and had gotten Joseph out of prison that day? What is the best Joseph could have hoped for? He would hope to be a minor servant in Pharaoh’s house. What a good thing that God put a forgetful cupbearer in prison.

Joseph — God’s Man in Pharaoh’s House

Joseph Interprets Pharaoh’s Dreams

But there were more dreams. There were not only the dreams of the forgetful cupbearer and the baker, but there was also the dream of the provident Pharaoh. Genesis 41:1 begins, “*When two full years had passed ...*” God had left Joseph in prison for two full years. The chief cupbearer had forgotten him for two full years:

...Pharaoh had a dream: He was standing by the Nile, when out of the river there came up seven cows, sleek and fat, and they grazed among the reeds. After them, seven other cows, ugly and gaunt, came up out of the Nile and stood beside those on the riverbank. And the cows that were ugly and gaunt ate up the seven sleek, fat cows. Then Pharaoh woke up. He fell asleep again and had a second dream: Seven heads of grain, healthy and good, were growing on a single stalk. After them, seven other heads of grain sprouted — thin and scorched by the east wind. The thin heads of grain

swallowed up the seven healthy, full heads. Then Pharaoh woke up; it had been a dream. In the morning his mind was troubled, so he sent for all the magicians and wise men of Egypt. Pharaoh told them his dreams, but no one could interpret them for him (Genesis 41:1–8).

Nobody in all Egypt could interpret the Pharaoh's dream. The cupbearer spoke up: "*Then the chief cupbearer said to Pharaoh, 'Today I am reminded of my shortcomings'*" (Genesis 41:9). He remembered at the right time. God keeps a good calendar:

"Pharaoh was once angry with his servants, and he imprisoned me and the chief baker in the house of the captain of the guard. Each of us had a dream the same night, and each dream had a meaning of its own. Now a young Hebrew was there with us, a servant of the captain of the guard. We told him our dreams, and he interpreted them for us, giving each man the interpretation of his dream. And things turned out exactly as he interpreted them to us: I was restored to my position, and the other man was hanged." So Pharaoh sent for Joseph, and he was quickly brought from the dungeon. When he had shaved and changed his clothes, he came before Pharaoh. Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I had a dream, and no one can interpret it. But I have heard it said of you that when you hear a dream you can interpret it" (Genesis 41:10–15).

Look at Genesis 41:16. Joseph was no longer a proud person. He had become a humble servant, "*'I cannot do it,' Joseph replied to Pharaoh, 'but God will give Pharaoh the*

answer he desires.’’ Joseph was now giving credit to God. Pharaoh then repeated the dream:

Then Joseph said to Pharaoh, “The dreams of Pharaoh are one and the same. God has revealed to Pharaoh what he is about to do. The seven good cows are seven years, and the seven good heads of grain are seven years; it is one and the same dream. The seven lean, ugly cows that came up afterward are seven years, and so are the seven worthless heads of grain scorched by the east wind: They are seven years of famine. It is just as I said to Pharaoh: God has shown Pharaoh what he is about to do. Seven years of great abundance are coming throughout the land of Egypt, but seven years of famine will follow them. Then all the abundance in Egypt will be forgotten, and the famine will ravage the land. The abundance in the land will not be remembered, because the famine that follows it will be so severe. The reason the dream was given to Pharaoh in two forms is that the matter has been firmly decided by God, and God will do it soon” (Genesis 41:25–32).

When God says something, it will certainly happen. When He says it twice, that means it is going to happen soon. But after Joseph had given the interpretation, he gave Pharaoh some advice:

“And now let Pharaoh look for a discerning and wise man and put him in charge of the land of Egypt. [Joseph must know that he is that discerning and wise man.] Let Pharaoh appoint commissioners over the land to take a fifth of the harvest of Egypt during the seven years of abundance. They should

collect all the food of these good years that are coming and store up the grain under the authority of Pharaoh, to be kept in the cities for food. This food should be held in reserve for the country, to be used during the seven years of famine that will come upon Egypt, so that the country may not be ruined by the famine”(Genesis 41:33–36).

This was Joseph’s advice: find one wise man to organize the harvest, get some commissioners, gather twenty percent of everything that is grown, put it in silos and wait for the famine: “*The plan seemed good to Pharaoh and to all his officials. So Pharaoh asked them, ‘Can we find anyone like this man, one in whom is the spirit of God?’*” (Genesis 41:37–38).

Do not get the idea that Pharaoh was confessing faith in the one true God. In the terminology of his day, he would be saying, “in whom the spirit of the gods is,” but he recognized divine revelation in what Joseph was saying. He had not been converted to Jehovah, but he had been converted to the fact that Joseph’s God was speaking through him:

Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, “Since God has made all this known to you, there is no one so discerning and wise as you. You shall be in charge of my palace, and all my people are to submit to your orders. Only with respect to the throne will I be greater than you” (Genesis 41:39–41).

That ends the study in the Book of Genesis in this lesson. As Bible students take some time to think about what we have just read. What is the lesson in this? What was God doing? In the case of Joseph, He was preserving a seed. He was still fulfilling the promise that was made in Genesis

3:15 that the seed of the woman would bruise the head of the serpent, and He was using all of the bad things that had happened to Joseph, even his pride. He even used his father's favoritism toward him, his brothers' hatred of him, and Potiphar's wife's evil desires. Everything was a part of God's plan. God was weaving all of this together as a master weaver would do.

It is quite an experience to watch someone weave a rug or weave a garment made out of all kinds of different colors of yarn. I once watched a rug weaver in Madras, India. It was a huge rug that hung from the ceiling to the floor. One man sitting on a stool was the master weaver. There were many people, three or four or six on one side and three or four or six on the other side, and he would call out orders, and they would poke the thread through, and he would call out orders, and they would pass it back through to him. I stood there and watched for about twenty minutes with an interpreter, and they stopped for a tea break. I spoke to the master weaver saying, "It is marvelous, a marvelously beautiful rug and not a single mistake has been made in these twenty minutes." And he said, "Not a single mistake! They made all kinds of mistakes." I said, "You didn't stop them. You didn't say, hey wait a minute, a mistake has been made, we've got to start over here." And he said, "Well, of course not. I just wove the mistake into the pattern I already had in my mind."

God is better than that rug weaver. He knew from eternity the mistakes that people would make. He knew from eternity Joseph's pride. He knew from eternity the brothers' hatred. He knew from eternity the lust of Potiphar's wife. He knew from eternity that the cup-bearer and the baker would be in the right prison. It is amazing that God was working all of this together and weaving it as one would weave a rug together. God was in control of this thing, but it is not only this incident that God is in control. God would continue to

be in control of Joseph's life throughout all of his life to bring about His will.

God is continually in control of man and the world that we live in. If like Joseph, we get rid of our pride ...if we will let evil things that happen to us, the mistakes we make, and the persecution of other people that comes upon us ...if we will let that drive us from our pride to our knees, and then to God, then, like Joseph, it will be said of us, "There is no man as wise and discerning as this one is." Joseph was about to become the prime minister of all of Egypt and the second most powerful man in all the world. It was not due to his ability but due to the fact that he gave God credit and because God was working in his life. Give God credit, and He will work in your life too.

The Account of Joseph (3)

Genesis 41:37–45:28

Review and Introduction

This lesson continues in the Book of Genesis near the end of Joseph's life. Previous lessons have covered Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Two parts of Joseph's life have been studied, and this lesson will look at the third part of his life. First in Genesis 37 he was the princely son and the favorite of his father, which was manifested by his ornamented robe or coat. He was a very proud young man who brought bad reports to his father of what his brothers did. He reported his dreams first to his brothers and then to his father. All of this caused jealousy among his brothers and even angered his father, but his father knew that when God gave dreams, God fulfilled those dreams. Because of Joseph's pride and the jealousy of his brothers, he was sold to Potiphar, who was an Egyptian and the captain of Pharaoh's host. There he was tried, but he was not the princely son anymore, but the patient sufferer. He suffered time away from his father and mother and brothers, and he suffered the temptation of a lustful woman, who was Potiphar's wife. She framed him as someone who tried to molest her. He suffered imprisonment and in that prison was exalted to the place of being over all the prisoners. It was Potiphar's prison in Potiphar's house, which the captain of the guard was over.

The chief cupbearer and the baker were also in that prison with Joseph. They both had dreams, and Joseph interpreted their dreams. The baker was hanged, and the cupbearer was exalted back to his place of honor. He was supposed to remember Joseph but very quickly forgot about him. Joseph, however, was remembered at a time when Pharaoh had dreams, and he came into Pharaoh's household and interpreted Pharaoh's dream. The interpretation was that there would be seven years of plenty followed by seven years of famine. Joseph, still the patient sufferer, gave Pharaoh good solid advice. The advice that he gave Pharaoh was that a wise and discerning man should be found who would be set over all the gathering of the crops during the seven good years so that during the seven years of famine there might be bread not only for Egypt but for all the world.

At the end of that counsel, Pharaoh asked his court officials if it would be possible to find a man as wise and discerning as Joseph, "... *'one in whom is the spirit of God'*" (Genesis 41:38), evidently one who had the divine power behind him. Since God was the only one who could interpret dreams and Joseph interpreted Pharaoh's dreams, Pharaoh concluded that Joseph had the power of God in his life. Joseph was chosen to become prime minister. That was the third act in this play of Joseph's life. First, he was the princely son, then the patient sufferer, and now he became the provident sovereign, the second most powerful man in all the world. In reality, he was the man who ruled the world by what he did as steward of all that Pharaoh had. He would increase Pharaoh's goods until Pharaoh became the richest and the most powerful man in all the world, and Joseph was steward of his kingdom.

Joseph, the Provident Sovereign

Joseph Exalted and Set Over All the Land

Genesis 41:37 was covered the last chapter, but this little bit of overlapping shows Pharaoh's decision that

Joseph was the man who Joseph himself had described as the wise and the discerning person:

The plan seemed good to Pharaoh and to all his officials. So Pharaoh asked them, “Can we find anyone like this man, one in whom is the spirit of God?” Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, “Since God has made all this known to you, there is no one so discerning and wise as you. You shall be in charge of my palace, and all my people are to submit to your orders. Only with respect to the throne will I be greater than you” (Genesis 41:37–40).

Joseph was chosen by Pharaoh to be over all the land of Egypt. He would end up being over the entire world because all the world was going to have to come to Egypt to buy grain:

So Pharaoh said to Joseph, “I hereby put you in charge of the whole land of Egypt.” Then Pharaoh took his signet ring from his finger and put it on Joseph’s finger ... (Genesis 41:41–42).

The signet ring made treaties and laws. When the signet ring was put on any document, it made the document the official law and order of Egypt. Pharaoh gave Joseph the key to the great house. He would make laws. He would make treaties. He would make decisions that would affect all Egypt and all the world. Then Pharaoh put on him the robes of royalty:

...He dressed him in robes of fine linen and put a gold chain around his neck. He had him ride in a chariot as his second-in-command, and men shouted before him, “Make way!” Thus he put him

in charge of the whole land of Egypt (Genesis 41:42–43).

Joseph wore Pharaoh's ring. He wore Pharaoh's clothes. He rode in the second chariot. Everybody made way before him. He was the number one minister, prime minister of all of Egypt, but Pharaoh was not through talking to him yet. Genesis 41:44–45 says: “*Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, ‘I am Pharaoh, but without your word no one will lift hand or foot in all Egypt.’ Pharaoh gave Joseph the name Zaphenath-Paneah ...*” Probably the best definition to these words is “the king says he will live.” With that name Pharaoh gave Joseph the right to decide who would live and who would not live. He made Joseph the king over all of the life in the land of Egypt by his name “*...and gave him Asenath daughter of Potiphera, priest of On, to be his wife. And Joseph went throughout the land of Egypt*” (Genesis 41:45).

Joseph was given the new position of prime minister. He was given authority with the signet ring. He was given royalty in the robes he wore. He was given the second place in all the kingdom in the chariot where he rode. He was given obedience from all the people as they made way before his chariot. He was given the right to determine where everybody sat, where everybody stood, where everybody walked, and he was given a new name that said that he was king in the land and would determine who would live and who would not live. He was given a wife, and he went throughout all the land of Egypt. And how old was he? Genesis 41:46 says, “*Joseph was thirty years old when he entered the service of Pharaoh king of Egypt...*” How old was he when he left his family? He was seventeen years old. For thirteen years he had been the patient sufferer in Potiphar's house and in Potiphar's prison. He ruled

Potiphar's house. He ruled Potiphar's prison. He ruled Pharaoh's kingdom. He was an "in-charge" person.

Joseph's Stewardship

...And Joseph went out from Pharaoh's presence and traveled throughout Egypt. During the seven years of abundance the land produced plentifully. Joseph collected all the food produced in those seven years of abundance in Egypt and stored it in the cities. In each city he put the food grown in the fields surrounding it. Joseph stored up huge quantities of grain, like the sand of the sea; it was so much that he stopped keeping records because it was beyond measure (Genesis 41:46–49).

Joseph was a very good steward. He would have liked to keep records of all the grain that there was, but there was so much grain that he could not keep record of it. An interesting point here is that when excavations were done by archaeologists in Egypt, they found multitudes of silos dug down in the ground with some of them still having grain in them. Joseph had dug silos in the ground to keep this grain in the great years of plenty in the land of Egypt. They did not put their silos above ground. There was no need to do that. Egypt is dry territory. They just dug holes in the ground and stored the grain there for the years of famine.

Joseph's Family

In Genesis 41, before the famine began in earnest, it was recorded that Joseph had two sons:

Before the years of famine came, two sons were born to Joseph by Asenath daughter of Potiphera, priest of On. Joseph named his firstborn Manasseh

[which means “forgetting”] and said, “*It is because God has made me forget all my trouble and all my father’s household.*” The second son he named *Ephraim* [which means “fruitful”] and said, “*It is because God has made me fruitful in the land of my suffering*” (Genesis 41:50–52).

Joseph found forgetfulness through his work and in his family. The two things that are important to any man are work and a family to honor. Joseph had now found comfort in the work he was doing for Pharaoh and in the sons he had. He even forgot the deep sorrow he had felt for thirteen years he was away from his father and his brothers.

The Seven Years of Famine

In Genesis 41:53–56 the famine began:

The seven years of abundance in Egypt came to an end, and the seven years of famine began, just as Joseph had said. There was famine in all the other lands, but in the whole land of Egypt there was food. When all Egypt began to feel the famine, the people cried to Pharaoh for food. Then Pharaoh told all the Egyptians, “Go to Joseph and do what he tells you.” When the famine had spread over the whole country, Joseph opened the storehouses and sold grain to the Egyptians, for the famine was severe throughout Egypt.

When Joseph took twenty percent of grain it no longer belonged to the people of Egypt; it belonged to Pharaoh. So the people would not simply be given grain. There was not a dole system here. They were sold grain. Pharaoh was becoming rich off the grain of Egypt, and all the countries were coming to Egypt to buy grain because the famine was

severe in all of the world. And again Joseph was making Pharaoh rich. Jacob was going to have to come to buy grain from his son without realizing that he was Joseph.

Reunion and Reconciliation

Joseph Meets His Brothers

In Genesis 42:1–28 the brothers of Joseph came to Egypt for the first time. They would go back a second time and then a third time. They would not know who Joseph was until the end of their second trip there. Genesis 42:1–2 says:

When Jacob learned that there was grain in Egypt, he said to his sons, “Why do you just keep looking at each other?” He continued, “I have heard that there is grain in Egypt. Go down there and buy some for us, so that we may live and not die.”

They were not out of money, but there comes a time when money is not the most important thing. People cannot eat money. People cannot survive on just money. Jacob’s family had plenty of money, but they did not have any grain. Genesis 42:3–6 says:

Then ten of Joseph’s brothers went down to buy grain from Egypt. But Jacob did not send Benjamin, Joseph’s brother, with the others, because he was afraid that harm might come to him. So Israel’s sons were among those who went to buy grain, for the famine was in the land of Canaan also. Now Joseph was the governor of the land, the one who sold grain to all its people. So when Joseph’s brothers arrived, they bowed down to him with their faces to the ground.

Joseph's dream was being fulfilled. Here were at least ten of the eleven sheaves on their faces before Joseph's sheaf, "*As soon as Joseph saw his brothers, he recognized them, but he pretended to be a stranger and spoke harshly to them...*" (Genesis 42:7). Joseph even used an interpreter, and as he spoke he used the Egyptian language. They did not recognize him because they were not expecting to see him. The last time they had seen him, they had sold him to the Ishmaelites, the ones from Midian, to be carried down into Egypt. They would not expect him to be the governor. At least twenty-one years had passed since they had seen him, and he pretended to be a stranger wearing Egyptian clothes. Maybe he was bearded. He definitely spoke to them in a foreign language. But he disguised himself so that they did not know who he was, and he spoke harshly to them. He put them through a series of tests to find out if they were truthful men now rather than the deceitful men they had been when he left them:

... "Where do you come from?" he asked. "From the land of Canaan," they replied, "to buy food." Although Joseph recognized his brothers, they did not recognize him. Then he remembered his dreams about them and said to them, "You are spies! You have come to see where our land is unprotected." "No, my lord," they answered. "Your servants have come to buy food" (Genesis 42:7–10).

They were not literally on their faces, but with these words again they were bowing before Joseph: "*my lord*" and "*Your servants.*" So they admitted that he was superior to them. They said, "*We are all the sons of one man. Your servants are honest men, not spies*" (Genesis 42:11). Maybe they were honest men. Joseph would soon find out in the trial. They definitely had not been honest before, but maybe

this trial would find them to be honest and sincere men. Joseph responded to them by saying:

“No!” he said to them. “You have come to see where our land is unprotected.” But they replied, “Your servants were twelve brothers, the sons of one man, who lives in the land of Canaan. The youngest is now with our father, and one is no more” (Genesis 42:12–13).

Notice the constant repetition of the word “servants.” They were humbled before Joseph. Normally a slave would work constantly, day and night. His life would not last for twenty-one years. It had been that long since they had last seen Joseph, so they believed Joseph was dead by now. Joseph was having none of their argument:

Joseph said to them, “It is just as I told you: You are spies! And this is how you will be tested: As surely as Pharaoh lives, you will not leave this place unless your youngest brother comes here. Send one of your number to get your brother; the rest of you will be kept in prison, so that your words may be tested to see if you are telling the truth. If you are not, then as surely as Pharaoh lives, you are spies!” And he put them all in custody for three days. On the third day, Joseph said to them, “Do this and you will live, for I fear God: If you are honest men, let one of your brothers stay here in prison, while the rest of you go and take grain back for your starving households” (Genesis 42:14–19).

This is interesting. He put them in custody three days. They came back the third day and he said, “Here is what I

will do. I will put one of you in prison and the rest of you go home, but I will keep this one in prison until you return.” He put Simeon in prison. Why not put Reuben, the firstborn, in prison? Why did he choose Simeon? It was Reuben who had pled for his life earlier, so Simeon was going to be in prison until they came back with Benjamin. And he sent them out with their grain. When they got a day’s journey out they opened their bags to get some grain for their animals and themselves — they were shocked because each one found his money in the grain bag. Now they were frightened because how could they go back and face him since it looked like they were thieves. They not only had grain, but they had their money. They went back and told Jacob, and their father was terribly disturbed because it appeared as if his family were a bunch of thieves. He knew that soon what food they had would run out too.

The food did run out, so Jacob called his sons to him, and he told them to go back to Egypt and buy grain. The sons were quick to point out to him that they could not do that unless they took Benjamin with them. This brought an immediate objection from Jacob. Joseph was already dead, and Benjamin was all that he had left.

So Reuben said that he would stand up for him. But Jacob remembered that it had been Reuben who laid with Bilhah, his handmaiden, and so he said he could not trust him with Benjamin. Then Judah said that he would take custody of Benjamin: “If I do not bring him back, you punish me and my house.” Finally, Jacob trusted Judah and said: “Ok, take Benjamin, and if he dies, he dies. If I be bereaved, I be bereaved.” He said, “But take double money. Take the money that was in your sacks plus the money for new grain and take this little gift and plead with the ruler of the land for me.”

The sons went back to Joseph, and again he recognized them. He gave them grain to eat and a place to clean up.

Then he told them, “We will have dinner tonight.” When the steward came, they said, “We found this money in our sacks, and we want you to know that we are not thieves.” The steward said: “I had your money all the time. Do not worry about it.” They went before Joseph and ate in his home. He ate by himself and they ate by themselves, and the Egyptians ate by themselves because it was an abomination for an Egyptian to eat with Hebrews. The Egyptians would not eat with Joseph because he had been a shepherd, and they would not eat with his brothers because they were shepherds (cf. Genesis 43:32, 46:34).

Joseph lined the brothers up in birth order, from Reuben all the way down to Benjamin, which left them wondering how he knew the birth order. He gave them the food from his table, giving Benjamin five times as much as any of the others. He was testing them to see if they harbored the jealousy toward Jacob’s other favorite, Benjamin, as they did toward him when he was the father’s favorite.

The meal was over, and he put the grain in their sacks, and said, “Put the money back into their sacks and put my silver cup in Benjamin’s sack.” They were barely outside the city when Joseph sent the army after them and said, “Bring back the one who has the golden cup.” The brothers said, “We did not steal the cup. If you find the cup among us, we will be your slaves forever.” They searched all their sacks, and they found the silver cup in Benjamin’s sack. They all went back to plead for Benjamin’s life saying, “Let us all be your slaves.” Judah then said: “Let me be your slave, but let Benjamin go back because I swore to his father that he would return, and I do not want to bring my father’s old gray hairs down to Sheol in sorrow.”

At this point Joseph could not take it any longer. He made all the Egyptians leave. He stood in front of his brothers and said, “I’m Joseph, your brother.” They fell back and did not believe him. He said:

... “Come close to me.” When they had done so, he said, “I am your brother Joseph, the one you sold into Egypt! And now, do not be distressed and do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here, because it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you. For two years now there has been famine in the land, and for the next five years there will not be plowing and reaping. But God sent me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance. So then, it was not you who sent me here, but God. He made me father to Pharaoh, lord of his entire household and ruler of all Egypt.” (Genesis 45:4–8).

The brothers were so happy. They wept with tears of joy and not tears of sorrow.

Joseph went to Pharaoh and told him that these Hebrews were his bothers. Pharaoh gave the brothers carts filled with all the luxuries of Egypt and enough grain to sustain everyone who would travel from Canaan to Egypt. So the sons of Jacob traveled out of Egypt:

...and came to their father Jacob in the land of Canaan. They told him, “Joseph is still alive! In fact, he is ruler of all Egypt.” Jacob was stunned; he did not believe them. But when they told him everything Joseph had said to them, and when he saw the carts Joseph had sent to carry him back, the spirit of their father Jacob revived. And Israel said, “I’m convinced! My son Joseph is still alive. I will go and see him before I die” (Genesis 45:25–28).

The Providence of God

This is a good time to consider the providence of God. Remember talking about how a rug is woven. Now think about the different threads that are in a rug. Consider all the different things that God used to preserve the seed, not only in Canaan, but also in Egypt so that one day the seed of the woman would come to bruise to head of the serpent. Consider these things as threads that were used by God:

- God used Jacob as a foolish father, a father who openly loved Joseph more than he loved the other brothers.
- God used Joseph as a proud son who would not only tattle on his brothers but even boasted of dreams that proved that he was superior.
- God used the hateful brothers who hated Joseph so much that they wanted to kill him.
- God used the Midianite band as they came by at just the right time to take Joseph to just the right place to sell him to just the right man in order to get God's will accomplished.
- God used the Egyptian captor who was an honest man and put Joseph over his house and blessed him because Joseph did good to him.
- God used the lust-crazed woman: without her, Joseph would not have gotten into the right prison.
- God used the good warden of the prison, who put Joseph over all the other prisoners who were there.
- God used the forgetful cupbearer. If God had chosen a cupbearer with a good memory, then everything would not have gone His way.
- God used an honest Pharaoh who put a shepherd over all the things of Egypt.
- God used the repentant brothers who dealt with their jealousy and ended up loving their father and Joseph.

What a beautiful thread. In this story God used strange tools and strange threads to make a beautiful rug complete with providential upbringing and preservation of the seed. God uses those same tools and threads today in the lives of man. May God use His children in all our strangeness to carry out His great and marvelous plan.

The Account of Joseph (4)

Genesis 45:16–50:26

Review and Introduction

This chapter covers the end of the Book of Genesis. Three parts of Joseph's life have been studied so far. This is the fourth section of Joseph's life. He was the princely son who was honored by his father and hated by his brothers at home. He became the patient sufferer in Potiphar's house and in Potiphar's prison. Then he became the provident sovereign when he explained and interpreted Pharaoh's dreams and gave the advice about how to take care of the seven years of famine that lay ahead. He then became the number two man in the empire, the prime minister, the governor of all the land of Egypt. His brothers came to Egypt to buy grain for their families in Canaan, at which time he tested them until they proved themselves to be the honest and true men they needed to be. He then revealed himself to them. They fell on each other's neck, kissing each other and talking for a long while.

It will be beneficial to back up a bit and read about the news of the arrival of Joseph's brothers reaching Pharaoh's palace. This will lead into the great scene that occurred when Jacob came to be with Joseph.

Israel Goes to Egypt

Revelation and Relocation

Genesis 45:16–20 gives the news of Joseph and his brothers reaching Pharaoh:

When the news reached Pharaoh's palace that Joseph's brothers had come, Pharaoh and all his officials were pleased. Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Tell your brothers, 'Do this: Load your animals and return to the land of Canaan, and bring your father and your families back to me. I will give you the best of the land of Egypt and you can enjoy the fat of the land.' You are also directed to tell them, 'Do this: Take some carts from Egypt for your children and your wives, and get your father and come. Never mind about your belongings, because the best of all Egypt will be yours.'"

Joseph's family did exactly as they were told leaving everything behind. Everybody received provisions and some new clothing for the journey home. Joseph gave Benjamin three hundred shekels of silver and five sets of clothes. Joseph told his brothers in Genesis 45:24, "... 'Don't quarrel on the way!'" He was evidently concerned that they were still very quarrelsome with one another.

Genesis 45:26–28 reveals the joyous news that the brothers shared with their father:

They told him, "Joseph is still alive! In fact, he is ruler of all Egypt." Jacob was stunned; he did not believe them. But when they told him everything Joseph had said to them, and when he saw the carts Joseph had sent to carry him back, the spirit of their father Jacob revived. And Israel said, "I'm convinced! My son Joseph is still alive. I will go and see him before I die."

But remember, Jacob had been warned time and time again not to go down to Egypt, and yet now it appeared as if he should. He needed a word from God:

So Israel set out with all that was his, and when he reached Beersheba, he offered sacrifices to the God of his father Isaac. And God spoke to Israel in a vision at night and said, “Jacob! Jacob!” “Here I am,” he replied. “I am God, the God of your father,” he said. “Do not be afraid to go down to Egypt, for I will make you into a great nation there. I will go down to Egypt with you, and I will surely bring you back again. And Joseph’s own hand will close your eyes” (Genesis 46:1–4).

What a beautiful promise! The son that Jacob thought was dead, his favorite, was going to be there when he died and would close his eyes, so Jacob went to Egypt.

Israel’s Relocation to Egypt

Genesis 46:5–7 records Jacob’s departure for Egypt:

Then Jacob left Beersheba, and Israel’s sons took their father Jacob and their children and their wives in the carts that Pharaoh had sent to transport him. They also took with them their livestock and the possessions they had acquired in Canaan, and Jacob and all his offspring went to Egypt. He took with him to Egypt his sons and grandsons and his daughters and granddaughters — all his offspring.

All the children of Jacob were not listed because he had other daughters besides Dinah. In Genesis 46:8–25 there is a list of those who traveled to Egypt with Jacob. The sons and the grandsons of Jacob are listed, a total of seventy-five people. The New International Version in Genesis 46:27 says, “*With the two sons who had been born to Joseph in Egypt, the members of Jacob’s family, which went to Egypt*

were seventy in all." In Acts 7:14, Luke recorded that there were seventy-five people who went to Egypt, and the Septuagint (the Greek version of the Old Testament) also says there were seventy-five people in Egypt who were sons, grandsons, daughters, and granddaughters of Jacob. They would leave Egypt approximately four centuries later with over two million in number. What a multiplication!

Jacob's Family Settles in Goshen

Genesis 46:28–30 recounts Jacob's arrival:

Now Jacob sent Judah ahead of him to Joseph to get directions to Goshen. When they arrived in the region of Goshen, Joseph had his chariot made ready and went to Goshen to meet his father Israel. As soon as Joseph appeared before him, he threw his arms around his father and wept for a long time.

Notice how trusting Jacob was of Judah. Judah was becoming the number one son. He would be the one through whom Jacob's seed would be traced.

They had been separated for over twenty years, and now a son who Jacob had thought dead was now back with his brothers, so "*Israel said to Joseph, 'Now I am ready to die, since I have seen for myself that you are still alive.'*"

However, Jacob did not die for another seventeen years. God was going to give Jacob seventeen years to enjoy Joseph's presence:

Then Joseph said to his brothers and to his father's household, "I will go up and speak to Pharaoh and will say to him, 'My brothers and my father's household, who were living in the land of Canaan, have come to me. The men are shepherds; they tend

livestock, and they have brought along their flocks and herds and everything they own.’ When Pharaoh calls you in and asks, ‘What is your occupation?’ you should answer, ‘Your servants have tended livestock from our boyhood on, just as our fathers did.’ Then you will be allowed to settle in the region of Goshen, for all shepherds are detestable to the Egyptians” (Genesis 46:31–34).

The Egyptians did not live in the land of Goshen. The land of Goshen was all the land of the delta of the Nile. The Nile is one of those strange rivers that flows north, and at the point where it enters the Mediterranean Sea, it parts into three branches. At that point the land is flat, and once a year four feet of water flooded across all that territory. It was a swamp land, perfect for the raising of sheep and cattle. The Egyptians would not possess it since to them raising cattle and sheep was a detestable thing. But for Jacob and his family it was exactly the best of land where they would become a great nation.

Joseph reported to Pharaoh that all had been taken care of in regard to his family:

Joseph went and told Pharaoh, “My father and brothers, with their flocks and herds and everything they own, have come from the land of Canaan and are now in Goshen.” He chose five of his brothers and presented them before Pharaoh. Pharaoh asked the brothers, “What is your occupation?” “Your servants are shepherds,” they replied to Pharaoh, “just as our fathers were.” They also said to him, “We have come to live here awhile, [they knew they were going back because they could not live forever outside of the promised land] because the famine is severe in Canaan and your servants’ flocks have no

pasture. So now, please let your servants settle in Goshen.” Pharaoh said to Joseph, “Your father and your brothers have come to you, and the land of Egypt is before you; settle your father and your brothers in the best part of the land. Let them live in Goshen. And if you know of any among them with special ability, put them in charge of my own livestock” (Genesis 47:1–6).

This Pharaoh not only trusted Joseph but also trusted Joseph’s family.

Look back to Jacob — Remember in the earlier study of Jacob it was mentioned that he would be the seer in Egypt as he stood before Pharaoh, his sons, and his God. Pharaoh acknowledged that Jacob was the superior person. Jacob was 130 years old at this time: “*Then Joseph brought his father Jacob in and presented him before Pharaoh. After Jacob blessed Pharaoh, Pharaoh asked him, ‘How old are you?’*” (Genesis 47:7–10). First notice that Jacob blessed Pharaoh. The Hebrew writer stated, “*But without any dispute the lesser is blessed by the greater*” (Hebrews 7:7, NASB). Jacob blessed Pharaoh, so Jacob was claiming to be superior to Pharaoh, and Pharaoh acknowledged that Jacob was superior to him when he accepted this blessing. Jacob told Pharaoh:

... “*The years of my pilgrimage are a hundred and thirty. My years have been few and difficult, and they do not equal the years of the pilgrimage of my fathers.*” Then Jacob blessed Pharaoh and went out from his presence.

Jacob blessed Pharaoh twice. He blessed him at the beginning of their conversation and then again at the end of their conversation. Jacob was seen to be superior to the ruler

of all the world. After this meeting Jacob settled with family in Goshen:

So Joseph settled his father and his brothers in Egypt and gave them property in the best part of the land, the district of Rameses, as Pharaoh directed. Joseph also provided his father and his brothers and all his father's household with food, according to the number of their children (Genesis 47:11–12).

Joseph's Wise Stewardship

Joseph was now the ruler of the house, although Jacob was still alive. Joseph was governor of the land and the provider for the family. Beginning in Genesis 47:13, Joseph would make Pharaoh the richest man in the world and the owner of all the land of Egypt. Joseph's wise business policies are seen in Genesis 47:13–15:

There was no food, however, in the whole region because the famine was severe; both Egypt and Canaan wasted away because of the famine. Joseph collected all the money that was to be found in Egypt and Canaan in payment for the grain they were buying, and he brought it to Pharaoh's palace. When the money of the people of Egypt and Canaan was gone, all Egypt came to Joseph and said, "Give us food. Why should we die before your eyes? Our money is used up."

The Egyptians said, "We do not have anymore money. We cannot buy anymore grain." Pharaoh had all the money in Egypt and Canaan in his treasury, but he did not give them food yet. They still had something to buy food with:

“Then bring your livestock,” said Joseph. “I will sell you food in exchange for your livestock, since your money is gone.” So they brought their livestock to Joseph, and he gave them food in exchange for their horses, their sheep and goats, their cattle and donkeys. And he brought them through that year with food in exchange for all their livestock. When that year was over, they came to him the following year and said, “We cannot hide from our lord the fact that since our money is gone and our livestock belongs to you, there is nothing left for our lord except our bodies and our land. Why should we perish before your eyes — we and our land as well? Buy us and our land in exchange for food, and we with our land will be in bondage to Pharaoh. Give us seed so that we may live and not die, and that the land may not become desolate” (Genesis 47:16–19).

Then Joseph complied with their wishes:

So Joseph bought all the land in Egypt for Pharaoh. The Egyptians, one and all, sold their fields, because the famine was too severe for them. The land became Pharaoh’s, and Joseph reduced the people to servitude, from one end of Egypt to the other. However, he did not buy the land of the priests, because they received a regular allotment from Pharaoh and had food enough from the allotment Pharaoh gave them. That is why they did not sell their land (Genesis 47:20–22).

Joseph had made Pharaoh the owner of all of Egypt. Pharaoh owned all of the money, all of the livestock, and all

Joseph Pledges to Bury Jacob in Canaan

God had been gracious to Jacob. He had been allowed to live seventeen years in the land with Joseph. Genesis 47:28–31 says:

Jacob lived in Egypt seventeen years and the years of his life were a hundred and forty-seven. When the time drew near for Israel to die, he called for his son Joseph and said to him, “If I have found favor in your eyes, put your hand under my thigh and promise that you will show me kindness and faithfulness. Do not bury me in Egypt, but when I rest with my fathers, carry me out of Egypt and bury me where they are buried.” “I will do as you say,” he said. “Swear to me,” he said. Then Joseph swore to him, and Israel worshiped as he leaned on the top of his staff.

Jacob Adopts Joseph's Sons

Jacob knew that he was about to die, and so he must now bless his sons. First, he called for Joseph to come in and in Genesis 48:5 he said: “Now then, your two sons born to you in Egypt before I came to you here will be reckoned as mine; Ephraim and Manasseh will be mine, just as Reuben and Simeon are mine.” This meant that Joseph got the double portion because both Manasseh and Ephraim would inherit in the house of Jacob. So Joseph had the birthright, the double portion. Genesis 49 will show that Judah had the Jacob's blessing and through Judah the seed would be traced.

Then Joseph brought Manasseh and Ephraim to Jacob for blessing, and put Manasseh in his left hand and Ephraim in his right hand. As he put them out to Jacob, the father's right hand would be on Manasseh and his left hand upon Ephraim so that Manasseh would get the greater blessing

because he was Joseph's firstborn. Jacob was like Isaac had been at this late stage of his life in that he could not see too well, but he crossed his hands and put his left hand on Manasseh and his right hand upon Ephraim, and pronounced a great blessing upon them. They would be powerful and would be called by the name of God, of Abraham, and Isaac. They would increase greatly in the land. And the angel who had been with Jacob would be with them and preserve them.

Joseph saw that his father had put his left hand on Manasseh and his right hand on Ephraim, so he reached out to get his father's hands, yet Jacob said, "I know. I know, my son. I know what I am doing." And Manasseh would be a great tribe, he would possess great land, but the younger brother would be greater than the older brother to the extent that the whole nation of Israel would be addressed as Ephraim in days to come. Manasseh inherited more of the land. Ephraim only possessed a small territory, but he would be the most powerful tribe in all of Israel other than Judah. Later on they would become two nations. One would be called Judah and one would be called Ephraim. But the main lesson was that Jacob had adopted Manasseh and Ephraim as his sons, making Joseph the firstborn, the one with the double portion of his substance.

Jacob's Prophecy Concerning His Sons

Then Jacob called for all of his sons to come before him. The twelve sons of Jacob stood before him and he blessed them as best as he could, one by one. Surely they were listening carefully because one of them would be chosen to be the one through whom the seed came. He brought Reuben in and said:

"Reuben, you are my firstborn, my might, the first sign of my strength, excelling in honor, excelling in power. Turbulent as the waters, you will no longer

excel, for you went up onto your father's bed, onto my couch and defiled it" (Genesis 49:3–4).

So Reuben was told, “You will not have the seed traced through you because you defiled my couch.”

Then Jacob spoke to the next two oldest sons together:

“Simeon and Levi are brothers [Aren't they all brothers? Why did he say that these two were brothers? It is because they were similar in their behavior] — their swords are weapons of violence. Let me not enter their council, let me not join their assembly, for they have killed men in their anger and hamstrung oxen as they pleased. Cursed be their anger, so fierce, and their fury, so cruel! I will scatter them in Jacob and disperse them in Israel” (Genesis 49:5–7).

Remember that back in Shechem that Simeon and Levi slaughtered the whole city and the whole tribe because of the evil done to Dinah. Because of that, Jacob said they would not be the ones blessed, but instead he would scatter them in Israel. For a time Simeon received a small territory, but he soon lost it and was scattered throughout the land. Levi never got a territory. There were forty-eight Levitical cities in which the tribe of Levi would live, but they were all within somebody else's land.

Then Jacob came to Judah in Genesis 49:8, “*'Judah, your brothers will praise you ...'*” Judah was chosen. Was he sinless? Absolutely not. Remember what happened with Tamar, when he committed fornication with his own daughter-in-law, thinking her to be a prostitute. He was not chosen because of his sinlessness; it was because of his faithfulness:

“Judah, your brothers will praise you; your hand will be on the neck of your enemies; your father’s sons will bow down to you. You are a lion’s cub, O Judah; you return from the prey, my son. Like a lion he crouches and lies down, like a lioness — who dares to rouse him?” (Genesis 49:8–9).

Nobody goes into the lion’s den, grabs him by the beard and shakes him awake. If he does that, he will remember it forever. Jacob said: “*The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet, until he comes to whom it belongs and the obedience of the nations is his*” (Genesis 49:10). A single seed was promised from Judah that would conquer all the enemies. “*He will tether his donkey to a vine, his colt to the choicest branch ...*” (Genesis 49:11). Notice that he did not say his horse. He did not say his charger. He said his donkey and his colt. That was what Jesus would ride on when He came in glory to the city of Jerusalem. Jacob continued with “*...he will wash his garments in wine, his robes in the blood of grapes. His eyes will be darker than wine, his teeth whiter than milk*” (Genesis 49:11–12). Judah was chosen to be the one through whom the seed would come. Throughout the rest of Genesis 49 Jacob tried his best to bless his sons.

Jacob’s Death and Burial at Machpelah

After Jacob had blessed all his sons, he gave instructions to them regarding his bones:

Then he gave them these instructions: “I am about to be gathered to my people. Bury me with my fathers in the cave in the field of Ephron the Hittite, the cave in the field of Machpelah, near Mamre in Canaan, which Abraham bought as a burial place from Ephron the Hittite, along with the field. There

Abraham and his wife Sarah were buried, there Isaac and his wife Rebekah were buried, and there I buried Leah. The field and the cave in it were bought from the Hittites.” When Jacob had finished giving instructions to his sons, he drew his feet up into the bed, breathed his last and was gathered to his people (Genesis 49:29–33).

Joseph went to Pharaoh to ask for permission to go and bury his father. Pharaoh not only gave permission, but all of Pharaoh’s officials went with him all the way from Egypt to Palestine. There were so many Egyptians in the party that when they arrived and began to mourn before they put Jacob in the grave, the people of Canaan commented on how the Egyptians had come to give a great mourning. So they put Jacob in the grave where Isaac and Abraham were and returned back to Egypt (cf. Genesis 50:1–14).

Joseph Receives Homage and Gives Assurance to His Brothers

Joseph’s brothers began to think that since Jacob was dead that Joseph would deal badly with them and kill them. So they came to Joseph and said, “While our father was alive he said for us to tell you not be angry with us and kill us but to be kind to us.” Joseph said, “Am I God that I would judge you? You meant evil for me, but God meant good. You don’t need to worry. I will preserve you all of the days of my life.” Then Joseph lived in Egypt along with his family (cf. Genesis 50:15–21).

Joseph Charges That His Bones Be Returned to Canaan and Dies at the Age of 110 Years

Joseph died at the age of 110 years. They embalmed him and placed him in a coffin. He had made them promise that when they went back to the promised land — not if, but

when they went back to the promised land — they would carry his bones and lay them there in a grave in the promised land. He died at 110 (cf. Genesis 50:21–26). How old was he when he became the governor and the ruler of all Egypt? He was 30. He ruled Egypt for 80 long years. That was longer than most people lived, much less to be ruler of all of Egypt and all the world.

The death of Joseph closes the Book of Genesis. The story does not end there, however, because the Book of Exodus begins with the Hebrew word “and.” Exodus is a continuation of this story. Everything was well at this time. The people of God were living in a beautiful place, seemingly at absolute and perfect peace. But they were not in the promised land, and the covenant with Abraham could only be fulfilled when these people were back in the land of promise.

The Land of Captivity

Exodus 1:1–4:17

Introduction

The study of Bible History continues to focus on the Hebrew family even though the study of the Book of Genesis has ended. The Book of Genesis is probably the most important book in all the Bible. It lays the foundation for everything that will occur. It is indeed the book of beginnings. It is the beginning of creation. It is the beginning of sin. It is the beginning of redemption. It is the beginning of covenant. Everything that the Bible will discuss is introduced in the Book of Genesis.

The Book of Exodus will continue to focus on the study of the Hebrew family. The word exodus means “a departure” or “going out.” The Book of Exodus looks forward to the time when the children of Israel leave the land of Egypt. At the close of the Book of Genesis they were in the land of Egypt living in peace and prosperity because Joseph was the prime minister, the ruler, the governor of all of Egypt, and therefore, all the world.

Egypt — The Land of Captivity

Names by Which It Is Called

Before getting into the Book of Exodus, with the story of the oppression and the exodus from that oppression, it will be helpful to think for a moment about the country and

the territory of Egypt. Egypt was a very important land in the Old Testament. So much so that in the study of archeology there is a separate science called Egyptology. People have studied this nation down through the centuries to see how it relates to the people of God and how the people of God relate to it in order to give Christians an even better understanding of the Word of God.

To begin look at the land of Egypt. Although the name is not found in the Bible, on many ancient monuments this land is called Kem. This could be the name that Egypt was called by its natives. In the Book of Psalms it is also called the land of Ham, for they were descended from Noah's son, Ham. The word Egypt in the Old Testament is from the Hebrew word **Mizraim**. Mizraim was the son of Ham and the father of all of the Egyptian people. This word is found nearly a hundred times in the Hebrew Bible, the Old Testament, and is always translated Egypt in our text. Two or three times in the Book of Psalms, Egypt is called "*Rahab*," not because of the Canaanite spy in the city of Jericho, but because Rahab means "the exalted one," "the haughty one," "the insolent one," or "the proud one." And that is the way Egypt was. The word Egypt, which is found in English translations, is the Greek name for this nation. It is a word that means "divided" because when the Nile arrives at lower Egypt, it becomes three branches and forms the delta.

Divisions of the Land

Egypt is always discussed in two categories, lower Egypt and upper Egypt. This can be confusing at times because the lower part of the Nile is at the top of the map since the Nile flows north. **Lower Egypt** is the delta formed by the three branches or the three divisions of the river as it enters the flat land just before it goes into the Mediterranean Sea. **Upper Egypt**, which is on the bottom of the map is

made up of a narrow valley. It varies in width from two to ten miles as it follows the course of the Nile. This is the fertile part of Egypt and the only part of Egypt that is suitable for permanent habitation.

Special Features of the Land

Egypt extends 640 miles from north to south and 770 miles from east to west at its widest point. That is approximately 390,000 square miles, and yet less than five percent of that territory is suitable for permanent habitation, and even less than that is suitable to grow crops. The Nile River is really Egypt. Without the Nile, Egypt would just be a part of the desert. The Nile river brings central Africa's fertility into Egypt and makes it a suitable place to live. The Nile has three sources: the Blue Nile, the White Nile, and the Atbara. From where the Atbara enters the Nile to where the Nile enters the Mediterranean is a distance of 1,500 miles. There are no other tributaries feeding it along that stretch. There has to be a large volume of water already there for it to flow all the way to the Sea without any other tributaries.

One of the most interesting things about the Nile is the yearly overflow. The Nile begins to swell in upper Egypt, but as it gets to lower Egypt it overflows completely when it comes out of the valley and flows into the delta, a plains-type area. The overflow begins in late June every year. It obtains a height of thirty-six feet above normal at Thebes and twenty-five feet above normal at Cairo. Cairo is just south of where the river divides. Then the overflow would spread out over all the delta to a depth of four feet at the mouth and stays that way for at least a month. This remarkable overflow is due to the heavy rains in central Africa, and it brings down new soil and keeps the land fertile year after year. This is what made Egypt the powerful nation it was. And this is why in the last few chapters the whole world came to Egypt to buy grain when there was a seven-

year drought and famine in all the land. The Nile was an unusually effective and efficient tool.

The People of Egypt

Consider the kind of people who lived in Egypt. What was their origin? Genesis 10:6 says the Egyptians came from Mizraim, the son of Ham. These people were one of the earliest civilizations known. Only the Sumerians civilization is known to be older than the Egyptian civilization.

As far as religion is concerned, they were very religious people. They had splendid and highly ornamented temples. Their priests were skilled in the learning of their day, practicing many mysterious rites. They had hundreds of gods, but they had one chief god, Ra, who was the sun god. Ra was followed by a triad of high ordered gods: Osiris, his wife Isis, and their son, Horus. Set was the author of all evil in the Egyptian religion. He was the Egyptian Satan with whom Ra, Osiris, Isis and Horus waged eternal warfare. The Egyptians did not seem to worship images. However they did worship various animals, such as bulls, dogs, cats, crocodiles, snakes, insects; and especially the beetle, the scarab, were regarded with great reverence because they were thought to be not gods but representatives of the gods, and to kill them was a fearful sin. The Egyptians believed correctly in the immortality of the soul, and they believed that the soul would one day be reunited with the body. This may explain the detail they showed in their practice of embalming the body. They tried to preserve the body until such time as the soul could be reunited with it.

The Egyptians also believed in the day of judgment when everybody would be rewarded according to his deeds. Osiris was the guardian of the dead, and he, with forty-two other gods who associated with him as judges, would at the day of judgment render absolute, perfect judgment to all people. Their religion was highly organized and had some

truth in it. God had revealed Himself in the past, and that revelation was never absolutely erased. Man knew about the character and the nature of God.

The Egyptians by nature were very intelligent. This is evident in their pyramids, the sphinx and all the ancient buildings they built. They were very progressive and were above and beyond the thinking of their day. They were kind and hospitable to guests, although they felt superior, and they let everybody know that they felt superior. They treated their women with respect. Agriculture was a high honored profession, but all shepherding, whether it was with sheep, goats, cows or whatever, was held in contempt. The shepherd was thought to be one cursed by God.

The History of Egypt

The history of Egypt has three divisions: the early empire, the middle empire, and new empire. The early empire was from 3,500–2,500 B.C. That was before Abraham went to Egypt. Their first king was a man named Menes. Their first capital was Memphis, which was very close to present day Cairo. During this one thousand years or more, all life centered around Pharaoh. It was during this time that the word “Pharaoh” began to be used for the ruler of Egypt. The word “Pharaoh” means “great house,” and it was that house that ruled not just Egypt but, as far as the Egyptians were concerned, all of the world. They thought of themselves as the mother empire. They believed that all nations had come from this great house, and so whoever was sitting on the throne in that great house was the father of all the world. So during these one thousand years, they not only centered their life around Pharaoh, but they considered Pharaoh a god.

The middle empire ran for about 750 years from 2,500–1,750 B.C. It was a feudal society during this time ruled by local princes named nomarchs. It ended with the

invasion of what is known as the Hyksos, which simply means the “foreign empire.” The Hyksos people were a shepherd people who introduced the horse and chariot. This might indicate that they were of Hittite origin because the rest of the Bible and archeology traces the chariot back to the Hittite empire in Asia Minor (at the northeastern end of the Mediterranean Sea). It was during the time of this empire that Abraham, and then Joseph, entered the land. This helps to explain why they received a warm welcome there although they were shepherds. The one sitting upon the throne was not an Egyptian, but a foreigner, who was himself from a shepherd nation that had introduced into Egypt the horse and chariot. This is interesting because Pharaoh chased the Israelites to the Red Sea in chariots driven by horses.

During this time the empire form of government, the pyramid form of government took shape. Pharaoh did not make decrees that were considered to be the word of god. Instead Pharaoh established men under him who would carry out his will and that of his officials. This is why Joseph could be made the second in the empire with people under him. They had established the kind of government that is popular today, the pyramid, the empire form of government. When Joseph died the Book of Exodus says that a new king arose who did not know Joseph (cf. Exodus 1:8).

The middle empire was followed by the new empire. It existed circa 1750–570 B.C. At the start of this empire the native Egyptians expelled the Hyksos and started a new government order. It was during the time of this empire, 1446 B.C. to be exact, that Israel came out of Egypt. Egypt was harmed by their departure, but they continued as a somewhat powerful empire until 570 B.C. when they were annexed into the Persian empire and then destroyed later, never to be strong again.

Major Cities in Egypt

There are six major cities to remember in Egypt. Five of them are located in lower Egypt and one in upper Egypt:

- **Memphis**, which was the ancient capital located near modern day Cairo.
- **Heliopolis**, called “*On*” in the Bible, was a little bit north and east of Memphis.
- **Rameses**, which was in the land of Goshen, was situated along the easternmost branch of the Nile.
- **Pelusium** was located at the eastern mouth of the Nile.
- **Alexandria** was located at the western mouth of the Nile. Alexandria would not be important until later, but it would become the second metropolis of the world, second only to Rome.
- **Thebes**, as it is called today, was located in upper Egypt. It was called “*No*” or “*No-Amon*” in some translations of the Bible. Amon was one of the chief gods of Egypt at a later time in Egypt’s history. “*No*” means a city, so here is the city of Amon as it was mentioned in the Bible.

The Geography of the Land of Wandering

Between Egypt and the promised land was the land of wandering. The first part was what is called the Sinaitic Peninsula, which has two major deserts: the wilderness of Shur and the wilderness of Paran. Israel would go through those wildernesses until they came to the Gulf of Aqaba, an arm of the Red Sea. It was there that they stood with the Egyptian army behind them and the impassable sea in front of them. God would part the Red Sea, Israel would go through on dry ground, and the water would cover the Egyptian army. There is archeological proof of this event, which will be discussed in the study of the exodus.

Israel would go through the land of Edom before they got to the promised land. It had as its boundaries the Arabah and Arabian Desert. It was a mountainous territory called Seir in the Bible. Edom was where Esau's people dwelled. There were three chief cities in Edom that need to be remembered: Bozrah, which was the capital on the northern border just before entering the promised land, Sela (Petra), which was the most mountainous city; and Ezion-geber (Elath), which was a seaport at the northern end of the gulf of Aqaba.

The Bondage of Israel

The Oppression

The beginning of the Book of Exodus records the oppression of the people of Israel, the birth of Moses, the flight of Moses, and the call of Moses. Exodus 1:6 says, “*Now Joseph ...*” The word “*now*” in the Hebrew is literally translated “*and*. ” The word combines the Book of Exodus with the Book of Genesis. As a matter of fact, the first seven books of the Bible begin with the word “*and*, ” and that is why the first seven books of the Bible are often called the “Heptateuch.”

Now Joseph and all his brothers and all that generation died, but the Israelites were fruitful and multiplied greatly and became exceedingly numerous, so that the land was filled with them (Exodus 1:6–7).

What was the promise to Abraham? The promise was that his seed would become as numerous as the stars of the heavens. God was beginning to fulfill that promise. Exodus 1:8 begins with the word “*Then*, ” the Hebrew word being “*and*. ” “*Then [And] a new king, who did not know about*

Joseph, came to power in Egypt." That does not mean he did not know Joseph's name or Joseph's history. It simply means that he did not recognize the agreements and the covenants that the previous Pharaoh and the old empire had agreed to with Joseph and his people. The new king said:

"Look...the Israelites have become much too numerous for us. Come, we must deal shrewdly with them or they will become even more numerous and, if war breaks out, will join our enemies, fight against us and leave the country." So they put slave masters over them to oppress them with forced labor, and they built Pithom and Rameses as store cities for Pharaoh (Exodus 1:9–11).

What Israel did not know was that they were being prepared for the forty years in the wilderness. They had gotten soft during all these years of being fed. And Pharaoh was really putting them into an exercise program to get them in shape to the journey for the promised land: "*But the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied and spread; so the Egyptians came to dread the Israelites and worked them ruthlessly*" (Exodus 1:12–13).

The Birth and Adoption of Moses

Pharaoh made a decree that every male child of any Israelite was to be killed at the time of birth and only the female children were to be preserved. He was trying to stop the growth of Israel. During the time of this decree, a man named Amram, and Jochebed, his wife, had a boy. They did not want to kill the boy, so they placed their baby in the Nile after making an ark made of bulrushes for him. His sister, Miriam, watched it as it floated down the Nile. Pharaoh's daughter also saw the ark and sent a slave girl to get it. She knew it to be a Hebrew child because he was wrapped in

Hebrew clothing. But she took the child to be her own. She talked to her maids and said, “But who will care for the child?” Miriam said, “I know a lady who will care for the child.” His own mother, Jochebed, was to care for Moses in the house of Pharaoh. He grew up as Pharaoh’s daughter’s son and as the grandson of Pharaoh. Pharaoh was trying to exterminate the nation of Israel, and yet, in his own house, he was bouncing the boy who was going to carry Israel out of Egypt.

The Flight of Moses to Midian

One day, after Moses was an adult, he was walking along and he saw an Egyptian beating an Israelite. He killed the Egyptian and buried him. Days later he saw two Israelites arguing with one another. When he tried to get them to stop arguing, they said, “Who made you ruler over us? Are you going to kill us like you did the Egyptian?” Moses knew that Pharaoh would find out, so he fled to Mount Sinai in the land of Midian east of the gulf of Aqaba. There he served a man named Jethro, who gave him his daughter, Zipporah, as a wife.

The Call and Return of Moses

While watching sheep one day, Moses saw a burning bush. He noticed that the bush was on fire but did not burn up, so he went to see the strange sight:

When the LORD saw that he had gone over to look, God called to him from within the bush, “Moses! Moses!” And Moses said, “Here I am.” “Do not come any closer ... Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground ... I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob ... I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard

them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering. So I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey...I have seen the way the Egyptians are oppressing them. So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt” (Exodus 3:4–10).

Beginning in Exodus 3:11–4:17, Moses began to make excuses:

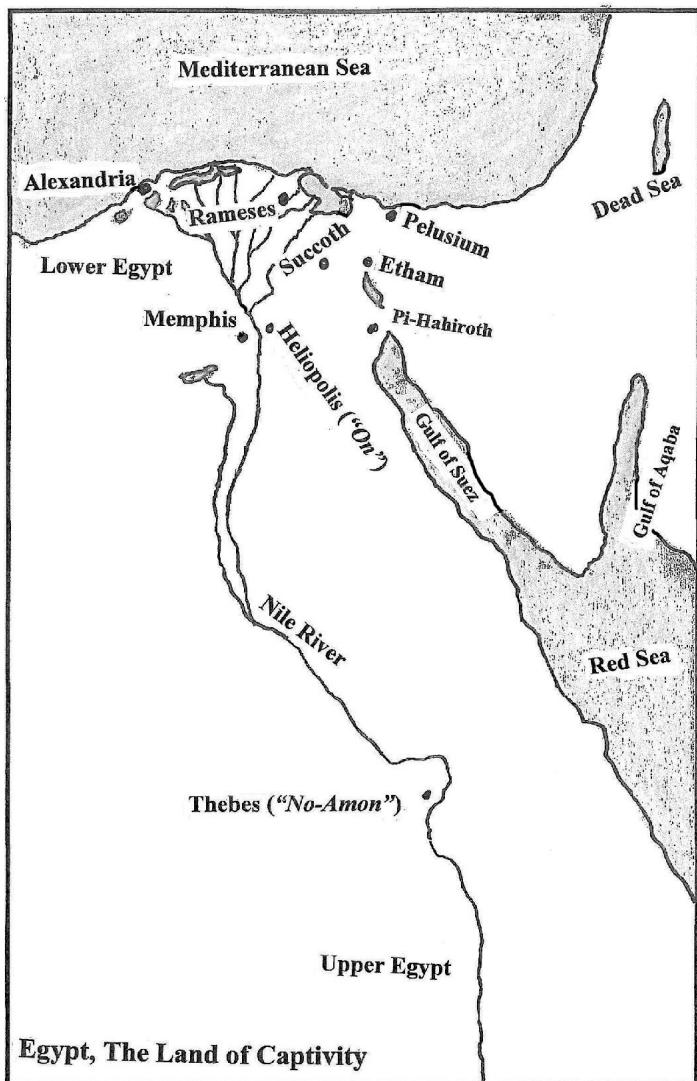
- The first excuse was: “*Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?*” And God said, “*I will be with you. And this will be the sign to you that it is I who have sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you will worship God on this mountain*” (Exodus 3:11–12).
- The second excuse was: “*Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ Then what shall I tell them?*” And God said, “*I AM WHO I AM...I AM has sent me to you ...The LORD, the God of your fathers — the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob — has sent me to you. This is my name forever, the name by which I am to be remembered from generation to generation ...The LORD ...appeared to me and said ...I have promised to bring you up out of your misery in Egypt into ...a land flowing with milk and honey ...*” (Exodus 3:13–17).
- The third excuse was: “*What if they do not believe me or listen to me and say, ‘The LORD did not appear to you?’*” Then the LORD to him, “*What is that in your hand? ...Throw it on the ground ...This ...is so that they*

may believe that the LORD, the God of their fathers ...has appeared to you ...If they do not believe you or pay attention to the first miraculous sign, they may believe the second. But if they do not believe these two signs or listen to you, take some water from the Nile and pour it on the dry ground. The water you take from the river will become blood on the ground” (Exodus 4:1–9).

- The fourth excuse was: “*O LORD, I have never been eloquent, neither in the past nor since you have spoken to your servant. I am slow of speech and tongue*” The LORD said to him, “*Who gave man his mouth? Who makes him deaf or mute? Who gives him sight or makes him blind? Is it not I, the LORD? Now go; I will help you speak and will teach you what to say*” (Exodus 4:10–12).
- The fifth and final excuse was: “*O LORD, please send someone else to do it.*” Then the LORD’S anger burned against Moses and he said, “*What about your brother, Aaron the Levite? I know he can speak well. He is already on his way to meet you, and his heart will be glad when he sees you. You shall speak to him and put words in his mouth; I will help both of you speak and will teach you what to do. He will speak to the people for you, and it will be as if he were your mouth and as if you were God to him. But take this staff in your hand so you can perform miraculous signs with it.*” (Exodus 4:13–17).

When Aaron and Moses got back to Egypt things began just as Moses thought they would. But before long Moses became the debater with Pharaoh and the people he had been with. This has been a quick survey of a long period of time. The people of God were oppressed after the death of Joseph and throughout the time of Moses’s birth. Moses tried to be a leader, but soon he had to flee to Midian. There he was

called by God as he led the flock of sheep to the far side of the desert, and he came to Mount Horeb, the mountain of God. Before long Moses' name would ring throughout all Egypt.



Wonders of Deliverance

Exodus 4:19–12:51

Review and Introduction

This chapter will look into the Book of Exodus, particularly the wonders Moses performed to deliver his people, Israel, from Egyptian bondage. In the last chapter God appeared to Moses on Mount Sinai and gave him His commission to go back to Egypt and deliver His people from slavery. After voicing his excuses, Moses finally asked for some sign that he could give the people to prove to them that he had been sent by God. God responded in Exodus 4:2–5:

... “What is that in your hand?” “A staff,” he replied. The LORD said, “Throw it on the ground.” Moses threw it on the ground and it became a snake, and he ran from it. Then the LORD said to him, “Reach out your hand and take it by the tail.” So Moses reached out and took hold of the snake and it turned back into a staff in his hand. “This,” said the LORD, “is so that they may believe that the LORD, the God of their fathers — the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob — has appeared to you.”

The LORD had another sign for Moses to take with him. Exodus 4:6–7 says:

Then the LORD said, “Put your hand inside your cloak.” So Moses put his hand into his cloak, and when he took it out, it was leprous, like snow. “Now put it back into your cloak,” he said. So Moses put his hand back into his cloak, and when he took it out, it was restored, like the rest of his flesh.

Then God told Moses that if Pharaoh did not let the people go because of the rod and the hand, then he was to go down to the river where God would turn the water into blood. Still Moses did not want to go:

“O LORD, please send someone else to do it.” Then the LORD’S anger burned against Moses and he said, “What about your brother, Aaron the Levite? I know he can speak well. He is already on his way to meet you, and his heart will be glad when he sees you. You shall speak to him and put words in his mouth; I will help both of you speak and will teach you what to do. He will speak to the people for you, and it will be as if he were your mouth and as if you were God to him. But take this staff in your hand so you can perform miraculous signs with it” (Exodus 4:13–17).

Now Moses was ready to go back to Egypt. His reluctance had been broken down. Aaron would be his spokesman, and he would perform great signs by the staff in his hand. Exodus 4:18 says:

Then Moses went back to Jethro his father-in-law and said to him, “Let me go back to my own people in Egypt to see if any of them are still alive.” Jethro said, “Go, and I wish you well.”

Moses Returns to Egypt

Moses' Mission Restated

Then God spoke to Moses restating his mission:

Now the LORD had said to Moses in Midian, “Go back to Egypt, for all the men who wanted to kill you are dead.” So Moses took his wife and sons, put them on a donkey and started back to Egypt. And he took the staff of God in his hand. The LORD said to Moses, “When you return to Egypt, see that you perform before Pharaoh all the wonders I have given you the power to do. But I will harden his heart so that he will not let the people go” (Exodus 4:19–21).

Moses knew before he even started that Pharaoh was going to be reluctant, even resistant, but God would not let that deter Moses:

“Then say to Pharaoh, ‘This is what the LORD says: Israel is my firstborn son, and I told you, “Let my son go, so he may worship me.” But you refused to let him go; so I will kill your firstborn son’” (Exodus 4:22–23).

Moses knew from the beginning that the last sign would be the death of Pharaoh's son. Now on his way back to Egypt, Moses had an encounter with God. For some reason, he had not followed the covenant of circumcision. His two sons were uncircumcised, so God stood in the way to kill the three of them:

But Zipporah took a flint knife, cut off her son's foreskin and touched [Moses'] feet with it. “Surely

you are a bridegroom of blood to me,” she said. So the LORD let him alone. (At that time she said “bridegroom of blood,” referring to circumcision.) (Exodus 4:25–26).

Exodus 4:27–30 continues with God speaking to Moses and Aaron:

The LORD said to Aaron, “Go into the desert to meet Moses.” So he met Moses at the mountain of God [Mount Sinai] and kissed him. Then Moses told Aaron everything the LORD had sent him to say, and also about all the miraculous signs he had commanded him to perform. Moses and Aaron brought together all the elders of the Israelites and Aaron told them everything the LORD had said to Moses. He also performed the signs before the people, and they believed. And when they heard that the LORD was concerned about them and had seen their misery, they bowed down and worshiped.

At the end of Exodus 4 the people believed they were going to be delivered. They believed God was going to immediately perform great miracles and deliver them from Egypt. But in reality, they were not ready to go yet. It was going to take the first three plagues before they were fully converted. It would take three more plagues to make a distinction in their minds between themselves and the Egyptians. Then it would take three more plagues so that some of the Egyptians could believe and join themselves to Israel. Then all parties were ready for the exodus. The last plague would result in Pharaoh’s tremendously hard heart being broken, and then Israel would go out, not simply with Pharaoh’s permission, but with Egypt’s money, gold, and honor.

Moses Before Pharaoh

The day after Israel had seemingly accepted Moses as a leader, things went bad:

Afterward Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and said, “This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: ‘Let my people go, so that they may hold a festival to me in the desert’” (Exodus 5:1).

Pharaoh then asked a question that he was going to slowly learn the answer to:

Pharaoh said, “Who is the LORD, that I should obey him and let Israel go? I do not know the LORD and I will not let Israel go.” Then they said, “The God of the Hebrews has met with us. Now let us take a three-day journey into the desert to offer sacrifices to the LORD our God, or he may strike us with plagues or with the sword” (Exodus 5:2–3).

It was an either/or situation. Either you let us go or the LORD will strike you with a plague and with the sword:

But the king of Egypt said, “Moses and Aaron, why are you taking the people away from their labor? Get back to your work!” Then Pharaoh said, “Look, the people of the land are now numerous, and you are stopping them from working.” That same day Pharaoh gave this order to the slave drivers and foremen in charge of the people: “You are no longer to supply the people with straw for making bricks; let them go and gather their own straw. But require them to make the same number of bricks as before; don’t reduce the quota. They are lazy; that is why they are crying out, ‘Let us go

and sacrifice to our God.' Make the work harder for the men so that they keep working and pay no attention to lies" (Exodus 5:4–9).

Pharaoh's solution to their request to go and worship God was to simply make them work harder. When the slave drivers told the people that they had to scatter all over Egypt to gather stubble to make straw they kept telling them:

... "Complete the work required of you for each day, just as when you had straw." The Israelite foremen appointed by Pharaoh's slave drivers were beaten and were asked, "Why didn't you meet your quota of bricks yesterday or today, as before?" Then the Israelite foremen went and appealed to Pharaoh: "Why have you treated your servants this way? Your servants are given no straw, yet we are told, 'Make bricks!' Your servants are being beaten, but the fault is with your own people." Pharaoh said, "Lazy, that's what you are — lazy! That is why you keep saying, 'Let us go and sacrifice to the LORD.' Now get to work. You will not be given any straw, yet you must produce your full quota of bricks" (Exodus 5:13–18).

Who was in trouble with the people? Moses and Aaron. The people were going to blame them. Exodus 5:19–21 says:

The Israelite foremen realized they were in trouble when they were told, "You are not to reduce the number of bricks required of you for each day." When they left Pharaoh, they found Moses and Aaron waiting to meet them, and they said, "May the LORD look upon you and judge you! You have

made us a stench to Pharaoh and his officials and have put a sword in their hand to kill us.”

Moses Before God

Who was going to doubt what God had said? Surely Moses would. God had sent him into the land to deliver these people, and rather than delivering them it seemed as though He had added to their burden. Moses was sent to relieve their burden, so he went to the LORD in Exodus 5:22:

Moses returned to the LORD and said, “O LORD, why have you brought trouble upon this people? Is this why you sent me? Ever since I went to Pharaoh to speak in your name, he has brought trouble upon this people, and you have not rescued your people at all.”

One has to admire Moses. He may not have thought he was a very eloquent man. But he was not only eloquent, he had the courage to go and argue with God:

Moses returned to the LORD and said, “O LORD, why have you brought trouble upon this people? Is this why you sent me? Ever since I went to Pharaoh to speak in your name, he has brought trouble upon this people, and you have not rescued your people at all (Exodus 5:22–23).

Moses might have been thinking that he would still like to be keeping sheep at the foot of Mount Sinai with Jethro his father-in-law. But anytime a person talks to the LORD this way, the LORD is going to talk back:

Then the LORD said to Moses, “Now you will see what I will do to Pharaoh: Because of my mighty

hand he will let them go; because of my mighty hand he will drive them out of his country.” God also said to Moses, “I am the LORD. I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob as God Almighty, but by my name the LORD I did not make myself known to them. I also established my covenant with them to give them the land of Canaan, where they lived as aliens. Moreover, I have heard the groaning of the Israelites, whom the Egyptians are enslaving, and I have remembered my covenant. Therefore, say to the Israelites: ‘I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. I will free you from being slaves to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment. I will take you as my own people, and I will be your God. Then you will know that I am the LORD your God, who brought you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. And I will bring you to the land I swore with uplifted hand to give to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob. I will give it to you as a possession. I am the LORD.’” Moses reported this to the Israelites, but they did not listen to him because of their discouragement and cruel bondage. Then the LORD said to Moses, “Go, tell Pharaoh king of Egypt to let the Israelites go out of his country.” But Moses said to the LORD, “If the Israelites will not listen to me, why would Pharaoh listen to me, since I speak with faltering lips?” (Exodus 6:1–12).

Ten Plagues — Pharaoh’s Ten-Lesson Course

Some Preliminary Facts about the Plagues

It soon becomes evident why Pharaoh would listen. He would listen because Moses was about to perform ten great

plagues. Look at these ten plagues in order to see that they built to a crescendo. They attacked every single god that the Egyptians held in great honor, and they exalted Jehovah.

The plagues came in a series of three: one, two and three, then four, five, and six, then seven, eight and nine, with finally the tenth coming as a climatic blow to Pharaoh himself. The first plague in each series, one, four and seven would be announced at the bank of the Nile River in the morning. The second set of three would be announced in the palace at night, and the third set of three would come unannounced. Plagues one, two and three came on Egypt and Israel alike. Plagues four, five, and six made a distinction between Israel and Egypt. Plagues seven, eight and nine made a distinction between the believing Egyptian and the unbelieving Egyptian. God was trying to convert the Egyptian people.

The Ten Plagues

The ten plagues are recorded in Exodus 7:14–11:10. For the first plague Moses went down to the Nile River:

Then the LORD said to Moses, “Pharaoh’s heart is unyielding; he refuses to let the people go. Go to Pharaoh in the morning as he goes out to the water. Wait on the bank of the Nile to meet him, and take in your hand the staff that was changed into a snake. Then say to him, ‘The LORD, the God of the Hebrews, has sent me to say to you: Let my people go, so that they may worship me in the desert. But until now you have not listened. This is what the LORD says: By this you will know that I am the LORD: With the staff that is in my hand I will strike the water of the Nile, and it will be changed into blood. The fish in the Nile will die, and the river

will stink; the Egyptians will not be able to drink its water’’ (Exodus 7:14–18).

Whether the blood was literal or a form of red poison does not really matter. The miracle was that when Moses placed his staff in the river, the water immediately turned red. Not only was the water of the Nile affected but also the water that came from the wells and cistern around the Nile. God had shown that the great Nile River was not the reason Egypt could be sustained. God could take away from them the one thing that they were dependent upon for their existence. God proved Himself to be superior to the river god. However, the Egyptian magicians were also able to change water into blood, which caused Pharaoh to harden his heart, and he refused to let the Israelites to go. Blood was everywhere!

Seeing Pharaoh’s response, God said to Moses: “Go to Pharaoh.” Moses went to the palace of Pharaoh to tell him about the second plague:

... ‘‘This is what the LORD says: Let my people go, so that they may worship me. If you refuse to let them go, I will plague your whole country with frogs. The Nile will teem with frogs. They will come up into your palace and your bedroom and onto your bed, into the houses of your officials and on your people, and into your ovens and kneading troughs. The frogs will go up on you and your people and all your officials’’ (Exodus 8:1–4).

The frogs were throughout the land even in the bread and in their beds. One of the chief gods in Egypt was a frog-headed woman who was the goddess of fertility. The purpose of the plague was to show Egypt that they would cease to be fertile because of Israel’s God. Frogs came up from the Nile and covered the land. Anywhere the Egyptians walked, there

were frogs. Anywhere they sat, they sat on frogs. When they laid down in bed there were frogs in the bed with them. When they cut their bread in two, there were frogs in the bread. Pharaoh had all that he could stand. He called for Moses to take away the frogs, and said, “I will let your people go.” When he woke there was not a single frog anywhere. All of them had gone back to the Nile, but still, Pharaoh hardened his heart because the Egyptian magicians could do the same thing with the frogs. Pharaoh hardened his heart; and he refused to let the people go.

God followed the frogs by sending the third plague upon Egypt, a plague of gnats:

Then the LORD said to Moses, “Tell Aaron, ‘Stretch out your staff and strike the dust of the ground,’ and throughout the land of Egypt the dust will become gnats.” They did this, and when Aaron stretched out his hand with the staff and struck the dust of the ground, gnats came upon men and animals. All the dust throughout the land of Egypt became gnats. But when the magicians tried to produce gnats by their secret arts, they could not. And the gnats were on men and animals. The magicians said to Pharaoh, “This is the finger of God.” But Pharaoh’s heart was hard and he would not listen, just as the LORD had said (Exodus 8:16–19).

Some translations say these were lice or fleas, but the point is that after Moses was told by God that there would be lice upon the land, that is exactly what happened. This plague was intended to attack the god Seb, the earth god. Even lice all over the land and afflicting all of his people, Pharaoh hardened his heart again and would not let the people go. This plague was one the magicians could not match: “*This*

is the finger of God" were their words to Pharaoh. They could change the water into blood, and they could get the frogs to come up out of the Nile, but they could not get the lice to cover the land. Pharaoh still hardened his heart.

These first three plagues affected the Israelites as well as the Egyptians, but that was going to change. Moses was told to go to the river in the morning and to tell Pharaoh about another plague:

"... 'This is what the LORD says: Let my people go, so that they may worship me. If you do not let my people go, I will send swarms of flies on you and your officials, on your people and into your houses. The houses of the Egyptians will be full of flies, and even the ground where they are. But on that day I will deal differently with the land of Goshen, where my people live; no swarms of flies will be there, so that you will know that I, the LORD, am in this land. I will make a distinction between my people and your people. This miraculous sign will occur tomorrow'" (Exodus 8:20–23).

The Hebrew translates the "flies" as beetles or scarabs. This was one of the Egyptians' great representatives of the gods. This scarab was a symbol of all of the gods, but now they were filling the land. In Exodus 8:28 Pharaoh said, "*I will let you go to offer sacrifices to the LORD your God in the desert, but you must not go very far. Now pray for me.*" Pharaoh tried to get Moses and Aaron to compromise. God had already told them they had to come to Sinai to worship. But Moses stayed obedient to God by saying, "We cannot do that. We are not going to offer a sacrifice here. God has said, 'Come to the holy mountain,' and so it is on the holy mountain that we must be." So Pharaoh hardened his heart again and would not let the people go.

Moses was told by God to go and inform Pharaoh of even more severe plagues that would come upon all of the cattle of Egypt, so he told Pharaoh:

“... ‘This is what the LORD, the God of the Hebrews, says: “Let my people go, so that they may worship me.” If you refuse to let them go and continue to hold them back, the hand of the LORD will bring a terrible plague on your livestock in the field — on your horses and donkeys and camels and on your cattle and sheep and goats. But the LORD will make a distinction between the livestock of Israel and that of Egypt, so that no animal belonging to the Israelites will die’” (Exodus 9:1–4).

One of the chief representatives of the gods of Egypt was the bull. He was the god of power. But God was sending a message to Egypt, “Pay attention. I am.” Moses represented the power of Egypt, not this bull. After all, the bull now had an incurable disease and would die. But not one single cow, bull, sheep, or any other beast in Goshen, where Israel lived, had one single disease among them. Later on, the Egyptians had animals, because they took them from the slaves.

Still Pharaoh hardened his heart, so the sixth plague came upon them unannounced:

Then the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, “Take handfuls of soot from a furnace and have Moses toss it into the air in the presence of Pharaoh. It will become fine dust over the whole land of Egypt, and festering boils will break out on men and animals throughout the land.” So they took soot from a furnace and stood before Pharaoh. Moses tossed it into the air, and festering boils broke out on men and animals. The magicians could not stand

before Moses because of the boils that were on them and on all the Egyptians. But the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart and he would not listen to Moses and Aaron, just as the LORD had said to Moses (Exodus 9:8–12).

The beasts that the Egyptians took from the Israelites began to break out with boils and with all kinds of disease upon them. This plague attacked the Egyptian god Typhon or Typhos, from which we have the word “typhoid fever.” This was a terrible and many times fatal disease. The god of disease was being attacked, and God was simply saying, “This god is not the cause of this. I am. I am the God of disease. I brought this disease upon Egypt.” What was Pharaoh’s response to this? Did he soften his heart? No, because that was not the will of God. Pharaoh hardened his heart again and would not let the people go.

Then Moses was told to go to Pharaoh again. This time the plagues were going to make a distinction between believing Egyptians and unbelieving Egyptians. The believing Egyptians were going to be given an opportunity to flee to Goshen and live among Israel where these plagues would have no effect. It was as if a curtain had fallen between the Egyptians and the Israelites, and none of the plagues could pass that curtain. God was keeping His covenant to Abraham. He was prospering His people. He was protecting His people. Moses was to tell Pharaoh that there was going to be hail and fire upon all the land as God was getting closer to attacking the great house of Pharaoh. God attacked the god of the air. The most important thing to life is the air that people breathe. He attacked the god that was the very reason for their living, but still Pharaoh hardened his heart. He did this even though a person could be walking along in Egypt where there was hail and fire and then take one more step and be in Goshen where the sun was

shining and everything looked beautiful (cf. Exodus 9:13–35).

Pharaoh was still refusing to honor God, so Moses was told to go to Pharaoh and tell him that God was going to send locusts upon the land. The locust were going to eat the entire harvest:

So Moses stretched out his staff over Egypt, and the LORD made an east wind blow across the land all that day and all that night. By morning the wind had brought the locusts; they invaded all Egypt and settled down in every area of the country in great numbers. Never before had there been such a plague of locusts, nor will there ever be again. They covered all the ground until it was black. They devoured all that was left after the hail — everything growing in the fields and the fruit on the trees. Nothing green remained on tree or plant in all the land of Egypt...And the changed the wind to a very strong west wind, which caught up the locusts and carried them into the Red Sea. Not a locust was left anywhere in Egypt. But the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he would not let the Israelites go (Exodus 10:13–16; 19–20).

Next to air, food is the thing that preserves life. God was in essence saying that He was going to take away life. And He did exactly that by sending a great locust plague. Again Pharaoh called for Moses and said: “This is too much for me. Go and offer your sacrifice, but leave your family. Leave your wife and children here. You go, but leave them behind.” Moses told Pharaoh that nothing would be left behind.

The next plague was darkness:

Then the LORD said to Moses, “Stretch out your hand toward the sky so that darkness will spread over Egypt — darkness that can be felt.” So Moses stretched out his hand toward the sky, and total darkness covered all Egypt for three days. No one could see anyone else or leave his place for three days. Yet all the Israelites had light in the places where they lived. Then Pharaoh summoned Moses and said, “Go, worship the LORD. Even your women and children may go with you; only leave your flocks and herds behind.” But Moses said ... “Our livestock too must go with us; not a hoof is to be left behind. We have to use some of them in worshiping the LORD our God, and until we get there we will not know what we are to use to worship the Lord” ...Pharaoh said to Moses, “Get out of my sight! Make sure you do not appear before me again! The day you see my face you will die.” “Just as you say,” Moses replied, “I will never appear before you again” (Exodus 10:21–29).

The night got dark, and in the morning it was still dark. All day long it was dark. God had attacked the Egyptian god, Ra. A person could be walking in Egypt in total darkness, then take one more step into Goshen and have bright sunshine. Still Pharaoh refused to let the people go. Pharaoh wanted a compromise, but Moses said, “We will not leave a single sheep or lamb behind. That made Pharaoh so mad that he said he never wanted to see Moses again.

As Moses turned to leave, God told Moses to let Pharaoh know that on that night Egypt would be visited by such a plague the like of which the world had never seen. God would send one angel to stiffen in death the firstborn in every single Egyptian house. God told Moses to tell all of

Israel to kill a lamb without spot and blemish. They were to put blood on their doorpost and lintel and stay inside, eating unleavened bread along with the lamb. They were to sing songs, not of joy, but of sorrow, for He was bringing a tragedy in Egypt that night. So Moses told Pharaoh what the LORD had said:

... “This is what the LORD says: ‘About midnight I will go throughout Egypt. Every firstborn son in Egypt will die, from the firstborn son of Pharaoh, who sits on the throne, to the firstborn son of the slave girl, who is at her hand mill, and all the firstborn of the cattle as well. There will be loud wailing throughout Egypt — worse than there has ever been or ever will be again. But among the Israelites not a dog will bark at any man or animal.’ Then you will know that the LORD makes a distinction between Egypt and Israel. All these officials of yours will come to me, bowing down before me and saying, ‘Go, you and all the people who follow you!’ After that I will leave.” Then Moses, hot with anger, left Pharaoh. The LORD had said to Moses, “Pharaoh will refuse to listen to you — so that my wonders may be multiplied in Egypt” (Exodus 11:4–9).

Just as God had promised, that night there was a moaning throughout all the land:

At midnight the LORD struck down all the firstborn in Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh, who sat on the throne, to the firstborn of the prisoner, who was in the dungeon, and the firstborn of all the livestock as well. Pharaoh and all his officials and all the Egyptians got up during the night, and there was

loud wailing in Egypt, for there was not a house without someone dead. During the night Pharaoh summoned Moses and Aaron and said, “Up! Leave my people, you and the Israelites! Go, worship the LORD as you have requested. Take your flocks and herds, as you have said, and go. And also bless me.” The Egyptians urged the people to hurry and leave the country. “For otherwise,” they said, “we will all die!” So the people took their dough before the yeast was added, and carried it on their shoulders in kneading troughs wrapped in clothing. The Israelites did as Moses instructed and asked the Egyptians for articles of silver and gold and for clothing. The LORD had made the Egyptians favorably disposed toward the people, and they gave them what they asked for; so they plundered the Egyptians (Exodus 12:29–36).

It was a night to be remembered. Two million people went out that day and night to camp in the wilderness. Pharaoh's back had been broken by the ten plagues that God had performed in Egypt. God will break the back of the unbelieving. That is why people need to be believers in God. We need to trust in the LORD. We need to trust in Jehovah so that He does not have to bring upon us plagues, tragedy, disease and disorder to get our love and concern. May the LORD bless us in the study of His Word, that we might come to be the people who can be called by God in the moment of tragedy to stand if necessary before kings to declare the greatness of our God. Otherwise God will have to smite this earth with a plague. Let us be about the LORD'S business. Let us tell others about the LORD'S mercy, graciousness and love, or the LORD will fling again the bloody finger of plague upon this earth. May God bless us!

The Exodus Experience (1)

Exodus 12:37–18:27

Review and Introduction

Israel had been in Egypt for hundreds of years, but now they were about to leave. The exodus experience will be the focus of the next two chapters.

It would be good to go back and think about what had happened in the city of Rameses in the land of Goshen, where Israel had been living and working for several hundred years. Joseph had been sold into slavery by his brothers. After spending some time in the house of the captain of the guard and being tempted by his wife, and framed by her, he spent some time in prison, where he met a cupbearer and a baker. Joseph had interpreted the dreams of these two men with the result that the cupbearer was released from prison and restored to his position while the baker was hanged. The cupbearer forgot about Joseph after his release from prison but remembered him when Pharaoh needed to have his dreams interpreted regarding the nation of Egypt. When Joseph interpreted the dreams and gave advice to Pharaoh as to a solution for Egypt's upcoming problems with the famine, Pharaoh made Joseph prime minister and governor of all the land. Joseph was only thirty years old.

For the next eighty years Joseph was second only to Pharaoh in Egypt and in the entire world. He eventually brought his family to Egypt, where they were given the best of the land for their flocks in the land of Goshen. Joseph's

family increased and became a mighty people with great flocks and great herds. Due to this growth in numbers, Egypt became afraid of them. God allowed them to be put under oppression and they worked in building the great store cities of Pithom and Rameses.

Then Moses was born. Moses prematurely tried to deliver the people when he was forty years of age. Stephen said in his sermon in Acts 7 that Moses supposed that they would know that he was the leader who was to bring them out of captivity. But the time was not yet right, because neither Israel nor Moses was ready. So God drove Moses to Mount Sinai, where for forty years he learned the arduous job of leading. He was no longer Pharaoh's daughter's son. He was now simply the servant of Jethro, the priest of Midian. Moses was given Zipporah, Jethro's daughter, to be his wife, and she gave him two sons.

It was at this point that God decided Moses was ready to go back to Egypt in order to lead God's people out of bondage. He was hardened, but he was sufficiently in love with God and had enough faith in God to deliver Israel from Egypt's bondage. So God called Moses, but now he was reluctant to go. Finally, after all of Moses' reluctance was broken down he went back to Egypt, and with the ten plagues sent from God, broke Pharaoh's back. That resulted in Pharaoh's calling for Aaron and Moses and allowing the exodus to begin.

In Exodus 12:31–32 the tenth plague had already been carried out. All the gods of Egypt had been conquered and Pharaoh's own house had experienced the death of Pharaoh's firstborn son. From this point, Pharaoh did not waste any time:

During the night Pharaoh summoned Moses and Aaron and said, "Up! Leave my people, you and the Israelites! Go, worship the LORD as you have

requested. Take your flocks and herds, as you have said, and go. And also bless me.”

This was the one time that Pharaoh got close to having a soft heart, when he said the words, “*And also bless me.”* Notice the attitude of the Egyptian people in Exodus 12:33–36:

The Egyptians urged the people to hurry and leave the country. “For otherwise,” they said, “we will all die!” So the people took their dough before the yeast was added, and carried it on their shoulders in kneading troughs wrapped in clothing. The Israelites did as Moses instructed and asked the Egyptians for articles of silver and gold and for clothing. The LORD had made the Egyptians favorably disposed toward the people, and they gave them what they asked for; so they plundered the Egyptians.

The Israelites had been in captivity, but they left Egypt not as slaves, but as honored people. They went out with the blessing of God. They went out with the command of Pharaoh. They went out with the goodwill of the people and with the gold, silver and clothing of Egypt. They had despoiled the Egyptians. Joseph had made Pharaoh rich; Moses made Pharaoh poor.

Leaving Egypt at Last

Rameses and Succoth

As the Israelites left Rameses the exodus actually began: “*The Israelites journeyed from Rameses to Succoth*” (Exodus 12:37). Succoth is not a city, but rather is a word

that means “booth.” It was there that the Israelites pitched their tents for the first time:

There were about six hundred thousand men on foot, besides women and children. Many other people went up with them, as well as large droves of livestock, both flocks and herds (Exodus 12:37–38).

Think about the journey on that first day. If there were 600,000 men besides women and children, then there were at least 1.2–1.3 million Israelites leaving that land. How many people went in when Jacob came to Egypt? Seventy-five went in. God had greatly blessed Israel in Goshen. Besides the 1.2–1.3 million Israelites who left Egypt, there were Egyptians who left with the Israelites as well. There were also large herds of livestock. It might have taken all day for that many people to leave the land on foot or by cart. Remember also that all of these people left Egypt in a great hurry:

With the dough they had brought from Egypt, they baked cakes of unleavened bread. The dough was without yeast because they had been driven out of Egypt and did not have time to prepare food for themselves (Exodus 12:39).

The Israelites had been in captivity for 430 years:

Now the length of time the Israelite people lived in Egypt was 430 years. At the end of the 430 years, to the very day, all the LORD’s divisions left Egypt. Because the LORD kept vigil that night to bring them out of Egypt, on this night all the Israelites

are to keep vigil to honor the LORD for the generations to come (Exodus 12:40–42).

The Israelites left Egypt 430 years to the day after they had come to Egypt. It is not clear whether this means when Joseph was brought to Egypt or when Jacob moved his family to Egypt from Canaan. The Israelites were to be vigilant and alert people, and they were to observe this day in remembrance of the night that God led them out of Egypt.

In Exodus 12:43–49 some Passover restrictions are given because the Israelites were to observe from that time on the day that they ate the unleavened bread and the bitter herbs, the day that the LORD passed over the Israelites when He destroyed all the firstborn of Egypt. The restrictions were outlined by God Himself:

The LORD said to Moses and Aaron, “These are the regulations for the Passover: No foreigner is to eat of it. Any slave you have bought may eat of it after you have circumcised him, but a temporary resident and a hired worker may not eat of it. It must be eaten inside one house; take none of the meat outside the house. Do not break any of the bones. The whole community of Israel must celebrate it. An alien living among you who wants to celebrate the LORD’S Passover must have all the males in his household circumcised; then he may take part like one born in the land. No uncircumcised male may eat of it. The same law applies to the native-born and to the alien living among you.” All the Israelites did just what the LORD had commanded Moses and Aaron. And on that very day the LORD brought the Israelites out of Egypt by their divisions (Exodus 12:43–51).

Exodus 13:1 gives the consecration of the firstborn: “*The LORD said to Moses, ‘Consecrate to me every firstborn male. The first offspring of every womb among the Israelites belongs to me, whether man or animal.’*”

They were to commemorate the day of the Passover. They were to eat nothing containing yeast. They were to do it in honor of the fact that God not only passed over their firstborn but also caused them to pass out of their slavery and captivity. When God led them into the promised land, they were to offer this sacrifice to God. This sacrifice and the purpose for it are noted by God:

“*After the LORD brings you into the land of the Canaanites and gives it to you, as he promised on oath to you and your forefathers, you are to give over to the LORD the first offspring of every womb. All the firstborn males of your livestock belong to the LORD. Redeem with a lamb every firstborn donkey, but if you do not redeem it, break its neck. Redeem every firstborn among your sons. In days to come, when your son asks you, ‘What does this mean?’ say to him, ‘With a mighty hand the LORD brought us out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. When Pharaoh stubbornly refused to let us go, the LORD killed every firstborn in Egypt, both man and animal. This is why I sacrifice to the LORD the first male offspring of every womb and redeem each of my firstborn sons.’ And it will be like a sign on your hand and a symbol on your forehead that the LORD brought us out of Egypt with his mighty hand*” (Exodus 13:11–16).

Etham

The Israelites continued on their journey from Succoth to a place called Etham, which would be the wilderness of

Shur. Notice here that they were led by a cloud and a pillar, which was the LORD:

After leaving Succoth they camped at Etham on the edge of the desert. By day the LORD went ahead of them in a pillar of cloud to guide them on their way and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, so that they could travel by day or night. Neither the pillar of cloud by day nor the pillar of fire by night left its place in front of the people (Exodus 13:20–22).

On other occasions this cloud would shield them from the hot desert sun in the daytime and the pillar of fire would give them warmth from the cold desert night. So God was not only leading them, He was providing for their comfort and their need.

Pi-Hahiroth

In Exodus 14 Israel was told to leave Etham. From Etham they journeyed to a place called Pi-Hahiroth near Migdol and the sea. As they camped there, Pharaoh decided that he had made a mistake in letting all his slaves go. He got all of his chariots and army to go with him, and he went out into the desert to recover them:

He took six hundred of the best chariots, along with all the other chariots of Egypt, with officers over all of them. The LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh king of Egypt, so that he pursued the Israelites, who were marching out boldly. The Egyptians — all Pharaoh's horses and chariots, horsemen and troops — pursued the Israelites and overtook them as they camped by the sea near Pi Hahiroth, opposite Baal Zephon. As Pharaoh

approached, the Israelites looked up, and there were the Egyptians, marching after them. They were terrified and cried out to the LORD. They said to Moses, “Was it because there were no graves in Egypt that you brought us to the desert to die? What have you done to us by bringing us out of Egypt? Didn’t we say to you in Egypt, ‘Leave us alone; let us serve the Egyptians’? It would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the desert!” (Exodus 14:7–12).

However, Moses was courageous and told the people:

... “Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the LORD will bring you today. The Egyptians you see today you will never see again. The LORD will fight for you; you need only to be still.” Then the LORD said to Moses, “Why are you crying out to me? Tell the Israelites to move on. Raise your staff and stretch out your hand over the sea to divide the water so that the Israelites can go through the sea on dry ground. I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians so that they will go in after them. And I will gain glory through Pharaoh and all his army, through his chariots and his horsemen. The Egyptians will know that I am the LORD when I gain glory through Pharaoh, his chariots and his horsemen” (Exodus 14:13–18).

Exodus 14:19–22 says that not only had a pillar of fire and a cloud gone before the Israelites during the night and the day, but God had been there also:

Then the angel of God, who had been traveling in front of Israel’s army, withdrew and went behind

them. The pillar of cloud also moved from in front and stood behind them, coming between the armies of Egypt and Israel. Throughout the night the cloud brought darkness to the one side and light to the other side; so neither went near the other all night long. Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and all that night the LORD drove the sea back with a strong east wind and turned it into dry land. The waters were divided, and the Israelites went through the sea on dry ground, with a wall of water on their right and on their left.

Try to imagine a wall of water on both sides, going up higher and higher. It would have been a fearful day. Bones would have been quaking, and knees would have been knocking. But the people keep on going. Why? Because Moses was ahead of them. The leader had taken the lead in Israel, and the people were following him. Praise the LORD. That day all of the Israelites passed over, along with the great multitude and the flocks and herds that had come out of Egypt with them. When everyone had crossed over, God allowed Pharaoh and his army to enter into the valley that had been formed by the walls of water from the Red Sea. When all of Israel was on dry ground, God spoke and the waters came together with the result that all of Pharaoh's chariots and horses and all of Pharaoh's army died.

It is an archaeological fact that in the Gulf of Aqaba there is a level place underneath the water that would have been sufficient for this number of people to pass over. In that level place are the ruins of chariots and chariot wheels. Pharaoh and his army were devoured by the sea. God used the sea as His tool to devour Pharaoh and his people because they had oppressed God's people.

Marah in the Wilderness of Shur

On the other side of the Red Sea, the people needed water. They came to a place where there were some springs of water, and they found out very quickly that these waters were “*marah*,” which is the Hebrew word for bitter or poisonous. God had Moses make the water pure so that the people could drink, and God began to tell His people the story that He would tell for the next forty years. That story centered on the fact that God was with His people. He would preserve them. Their clothes would not get old. Their shoes would not wear out. They would be fed with bread from heaven, and water would be supplied from the rocks. They would be fed with quail that God stacked up three feet deep. God would take care of His people whether or not they were faithful to Him because of the promise that He had made to Abraham. He had made a covenant to Israel that they would enter into the promised land.

Elim

From Marah they journeyed to a place called Elim where there were twelve springs and seventy palm trees. Springs and palm trees sound good, but unless God miraculously continued to supply springs, especially when there were 1.2 million Israelites, plus some Egyptians to make nearly two million people, then this would simply be a mockery. Seventy palm trees would not provide enough dates to feed two million people. God was trying to tell them that this land could not sustain them. There were not enough crops. There was not enough water in this land to sustain all of them. So God would be the One who sustained them. This was the lesson Israel learned at the springs of Elim.

Wilderness of Sin (Dophkah and Alush)

From Elim they traveled to the Desert of Sin. It was here that the Israelites would sin because they murmured against Moses:

The whole Israelite community set out from Elim and came to the Desert of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after they had come out of Egypt. In the desert the whole community grumbled against Moses and Aaron. The Israelites said to them, “If only we had died by the LORD’S hand in Egypt! There we sat around pots of meat and ate all the food we wanted, but you have brought us out into this desert to starve this entire assembly to death” (Exodus 16:1–3).

It is a historical fact that freed slaves do not know what to do with their freedom. The people longed for the flesh pots of Egypt because they did not have the food their bodies desired. The LORD heard this complaining, so He spoke to Moses:

Then the LORD said to Moses, “I will rain down bread from heaven for you. The people are to go out each day and gather enough for that day. In this way I will test them and see whether they will follow my instructions. On the sixth day they are to prepare what they bring in, and that is to be twice as much as they gather on the other days” (Exodus 16:4–5).

God was about to give them a day called the Sabbath day. It was a day in which they were to remember that God delivered them from Egypt’s bondage. On that day they were

to rest and serve the LORD. The next morning the people found flakes on all of the bushes. They gathered these flakes and made bread out of them. They looked at these flakes and wondered what it was. From that day on they called it manna, which means “what is this?” They did not know where it came from except that it came from God. They did not know what it was except that it would sustain their life. They did not know what to do with it until God told them to bake it and make bread out of it, and then they were sustained by the thing that came from God. God was teaching them, and by teaching them, He teaches Christians that the only way that we are going to be able to sustain ourselves in this unfriendly environment of the world is by learning to trust His grace and by using whatever provision He gives to us for that day. That is why when Jesus taught His disciples to pray, He said: ““Give us today our daily bread”” (Matthew 6:11). That is a daily prayer. That is a morning prayer for the bread of a single day. That is all the LORD has promised to provide, the bread for this day.

God provided manna, but eventually they complained about that also, so God gave them quail. He gave them quail not for a day or two, but quail stacked up three feet high. Some people believe that this meant that the quail were flying three feet high so that they could catch them. This does not seem to be what is being said here. God killed enough quail to meet the people’s needs. The people were once again being taught that God provides not for the future but for today. They had the bread and meat they needed for the day, along with all the water they needed.

Rephidim

In Exodus 17 the people arrived at a place called Rephidim, where they set up their camp, but there was no water for the people:

So they quarreled with Moses and said, “Give us water to drink.” Moses replied, “Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you put the LORD to the test?” But the people were thirsty for water there, and they grumbled against Moses. They said, “Why did you bring us up out of Egypt to make us and our children and livestock die of thirst?” Then Moses cried out to the LORD, “What am I to do with these people? They are almost ready to stone me.” The LORD answered Moses, “Walk on ahead of the people. Take with you some of the elders of Israel and take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile, and go. I will stand there before you by the rock at Horeb. Strike the rock, and water will come out of it for the people to drink.” So Moses did this in the sight of the elders of Israel. And he called the place Massah and Meribah because the Israelites quarreled and because they tested the LORD saying, “Is the LORD among us or not?” (Exodus 17:2–7).

The LORD did bring them water. Water came out of the rock, and the place was called Massah and Meribah because of the quarreling and contention that took place there between the people, Moses and God. Israel was a complaining, grumbling and quarreling people because they were free from slavery and did not know what to do with their freedom.

Another important event occurred in Exodus 17 when the Israelites met a people called the Amalekites. These people were on their way to defeat the Egyptians. They were going to destroy the Egypt that Israel had just despoiled. This was not some small tribal people. This was a huge army of people who now faced Israel. It was at this point that

Joshua came forward as the general of God's people. He had been Moses' servant, his right-hand man, but now he became what he was called by God to be — the general of the army of God.

Exodus 17:8–16 tells of Israel going down to fight the Amalekites in the valley below Rephidim. Moses stood on top of the mountain and held his hands in the air with the rod in his hands. As he held the rod up the Amalekites were defeated in the valley below. When the rod went down, Israel was defeated. A person can only hold their hands up for so long, so Aaron and Hur (Miriam's husband), stood on both sides of him and held his hands up. This allowed the rod to stay raised until Joshua finally defeated the Amalekites in the valley below. It was a day to be remembered. The Amalekites did go on to defeat Egypt, and Israel went on to inherit the promised land.

As Moses traveled toward the promised land, Jethro, his father-in-law, came out to meet him. He watched what Moses did during the day. All day long Moses sat in the tent of meeting and all of Israel lined up to receive counsel and have their problems solved, but when the day was over most of them went home without seeing Moses. So Jethro asked Moses: "... *'What is this you are doing for the people? Why do you alone sit as judge, while all these people stand around you from morning till evening?'*" (Exodus 18:14). Jethro told Moses that what he was doing was not good. Jethro then told Moses what he needed to do. Moses needed to divide Israel and put captains over ten, over fifty, over a hundred, and over a thousand. Then there would be family heads, tribal heads, and finally the head of each single tribe. What Moses needed to do was delegate some of his authority. That is true in any situation among God's people. The Kingdom of God, the Church of the LORD, also needs to be organized in such a fashion. Nobody should be responsible for more than ten people, and everybody can get

answers to their problems from the one who is above them. If that person cannot solve it, then the one above him should hear the case, and if he cannot solve it, then the one above him, until finally, it will get to the elders, the bishops, the leaders of the people of God and then finally submitted to God Himself. The Word of God, of course, will always be the guide. Christians need to work and live so that we are our brother's keeper. God help us not to make the mistake that Moses made in Egypt.

The Exodus Experience (2)

Exodus 19–40, Numbers 1–15

Review and Introduction

The previous chapter covered Israel's departure from Egypt with all the riches of Egypt by the mighty hand of God. A few days later Pharaoh was sorry that he had let the Israelites go, so he pursued Israel. When Pharaoh caught up to Israel, he and his entire army were destroyed in the Red Sea, and Israel was triumphant with the LORD as their leader and with Moses as their apostle and provider.

It became apparent almost immediately that the land between Egypt and the promised land could not sustain the Israelites. There was not enough water or food. What was really happening was that the people were being tested, and they failed the test. They grumbled, complained, argued and fought with Moses until finally the LORD rained manna from heaven so that they could make their bread, and He gave them quail to eat and water from the rock. As God had told them time and time again, what He was trying to get them to learn was that they needed to trust Him. He was the One who cared for them. He was the One who would provide for them. Pharaoh could not take care of them because he was dead. The land could not take care of them because it was arid. Moses could not take care of them because he was limited in his power. Only God, who is the LORD and who defeated all of Egypt's gods, could provide for them in that wilderness.

One lesson that Israel had learned was that Moses was not adequate as their spiritual help and their spiritual guide. They had tried to line up at his tent and get advice or counsel from him, but that failed to work because Moses could not handle the workload by himself. So Jethro, a priest of God and Moses' father-in-law, had given Moses the revelation of how to delegate his authority so the case load could be handled. Moses was told to organize the camp so that every tenth person was a caregiver and every person had someone who they were intimate with. The purpose of this was so that every person could get his counsel and advice in order to be the spiritual person he ought to be.

Meeting God at Mount Sinai

The Law Given at Sinai/Horeb

Now that the people recognized that it was God who would supply them with all of their needs and Moses has a system of delegation in place, the people were ready to hear the law of God. They had finally arrived at the mountain where Moses had served his father-in-law as a shepherd, Mount Sinai. It was here that God would speak to them. From Exodus 19:1 through Numbers 10, Israel would be at Sinai. God was going to do marvelous things among them. There are great spiritual lessons even for Christians today. These laws were not given for us to follow, but the God who gave these laws is still to be followed, and the principles started here will enable us to know the attitude in which He would have us serve Him today under the new covenant.

Several things that occurred during this period of time will be noted, and then attention will be focused on their journey toward the promised land. Israel arrived at Mount Sinai in the third month after they left Egypt, and they would be there until the end of the second year. They would be only

out of the promised land thirty-eight years when this story is over.

In Exodus 19–24 the law is given. The law is not just the Ten Commandments. The Ten Commandments are like the beatitudes in the Sermon on the Mount. They are the introduction to all of the principles that will be discussed during this time and from this law. This law was a national law for Israel. It provided such things as provisions for taxes, for the killing of a person, and for stealing a person's sheep or a person's wife. First of all legal laws are found in what is referred to as the Law of God. But there are also laws for individuals about their health, laws about the way they are to treat their wives and children, and laws that deal with the minute details of personal life, hygiene and family ordinances. But also typical things are found in this law, such as sacrifices are demanded and commanded that will find their fulfillment either in the LORD'S sacrifice on the cross or in the Christians' daily sacrifice for the LORD.

The Pattern for the Tabernacle Given at Mount Sinai

In Exodus 25–31 the pattern for the tabernacle is given. The word “tabernacle” simply means “tent.” It was a fairly large tent. It had one section in it that was 20 x 10 cubits and one section that was 10 x 10 x 10 cubits. The smaller one of these was called the “*Most Holy Place.*” All of the furniture found there is described in Exodus 25–31.

The Idolatry of the People at Mount Sinai — The Golden Calf

In Exodus 32–34 one of the most tragic events in the wilderness occurred. While Moses was up on the mountain receiving all of this great testimony from God, the people below were again thinking of Egypt. They were thinking about how dry it was in the desert and how all they had to eat

was manna and quail. All they had to drink was water that came from rock. They no longer had the beautiful things of Egypt, and so they decided to make themselves a god and go back to Egypt. The people had Aaron, Moses' own brother, take gold earrings and the gold rings they got from the Egyptians, melt them down, and make them a golden calf like the one Egypt had. The people began to bow down to this golden calf saying, "... *'These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt'*" (Exodus 32:4). They began to dance, drink and have sexual orgies until finally they were caught up in the kind of religion that the pagans were caught up in. They also planned to appoint a new leader other than Moses, for they believed Moses had died on the mountain. They were going to go back to Egypt, apologize for having left, and again become the slaves of Egypt. God told Moses:

... "*Go down, because your people, whom you brought up out of Egypt, have become corrupt. They have been quick to turn away from what I commanded them and have made themselves an idol cast in the shape of a calf. They have bowed down to it and sacrificed to it and have said, 'These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt'*" (Exodus 32:7–8).

Moses walked down the mountain with two tablets on which were written the ten great commandments of God. Joshua had been waiting for him on the mountainside, and as they neared the camp Joshua heard the noise. Joshua said, "... *'There is the sound of war in the camp'*" (Exodus 32:17). That is what a general would hear, but Moses, being the spiritual leader of the people, heard the noise and said, "... *'It is not the sound of victory, it is not the sound of defeat; it is the sound of singing that I hear'*" (Exodus 32:18).

As Moses and Joshua approached the camp, Moses saw the golden calf. He saw all the people dancing before it. He saw all of the drinking and orgies going on, and he was so angry that he threw down the tablets of stone on which were written the Ten Commandments of God and broke them. The commandments were already being broken by the people in the valley, and they had not even received them yet. Moses came down and rebuked them for the evil that they had done and demanded that those who had caused this die. He then took the golden calf, ground it into fine powder and mixed it in their drinking water. The people drank that golden calf in their water until the water was all gone. So God through Moses was trying to tell them that Jehovah alone was God and that anything else brought not only defeat and death, but destruction to the people of God.

The people had learned to bow before other gods before they ever entered the promised land. This was not a people who deserved to be delivered; it was a people who deserved to be destroyed. They were preserved by the grace of God, and not by the good deeds they were doing or by the fact that they were walking the promised land. The LORD had not left them, though, because as soon as the incident with the golden calf was settled, they began the first steps toward erecting of the tabernacle.

The Construction of the Tabernacle at Mount Sinai

In Exodus 35–40 the people got everything ready to build the tabernacle, make the furnishings and make the ark of the covenant. Instructions in getting the priests trained on how to function in the tabernacle and everything to be provided for their worship in this tabernacle were described. God intended to dwell in this tabernacle and did so until later when David and Solomon built Him a temple. God said, “I never asked for a temple to dwell in” (cf. 2 Samuel

7:5–7). God was satisfied with this movable tent because He wanted to teach the people a very important lesson, which was that no matter where they had a house, that house was nothing but a tent. No matter where these people called home, they were still strangers and sojourners in a foreign land, and they must never believe it was time for them to dig their roots deep and get to the point where they were at home:

By faith he [Abraham] made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God (Hebrews 11:9–10).

The Israelites were to be looking for a city that had a foundation whose builder and maker is God. The construction of the tabernacle brings the Book of Exodus to a close.

Regulations for Consecration and Worship

Worship of the Tabernacle Instituted (Book of Leviticus)

In the Book of Leviticus the people of Israel were taught how to worship God. That is what the whole Book of Leviticus, with the exception of Leviticus 2, is all about. It is a book on how worship is to be done. Each sacrifice is explained in detail as are all of the feasts. In Leviticus all the offerings are discussed. The Book of Leviticus is fabulous. Throughout the book look for this statement or thought: “*The LORD is holy.*” It is the holiness of God that is stressed in the Book of Leviticus, not the sacredness of worship. Worship needs to be sacred, but that is not the emphasis of

God in the Book of Leviticus. The emphasis on God is that He is holy, and therefore, He is to be worshiped. Since He alone is holy, worship to Him is to be sacred.

A National Census Is Taken

In Numbers 1–4 a national census was taken. Each tribe was numbered and each subdivision named. All the men in each tribe, along with all the men in each subdivision, were counted until finally, when that count was over, Israel numbered over 605,000 men. Israel had not lost any of their numbers. They had the same number of men they had had two years before when they left Egyptian bondage. They would be preserved in this land with this number of people even though these people would not enter promised land because of their rebellion and because of Moses' sin. Instead, their sons would enter the promised land, at which time there would be 603,000 of them. God had fulfilled part of His promise to Abraham. Abraham was a great nation of people who had been given a great law and who were now marching toward a great land. That is all it takes to have a nation: a people, a law and a land. They were a people, they had a law, and soon they would enter a land, not as a tribal few, but as a great nation.

The People Must Be Pure

In Numbers 5–6 the people were purified. They went through a ceremony that purified them as a nation and made them holy to God. They had been brought out of bondage, they had been given a law, and they had been given a tabernacle in which to worship. They had been given a revelation of God's holiness, and now they were given a ceremony by which they could become ceremonially pure. A person can never be sinless, but by the grace of God, the blood of Christ can make him ceremonially pure so that he can stand before God to worship Him.

The Tabernacle Erected and Furnished

As soon as the people were pure, the tabernacle was set up. Everything was ready, having already been built according to the instructions given to Moses by God. All the laws concerning what was to happen in the tabernacle had been given. It was now possible for the tabernacle to be erected and for the people to enter it in order to worship God. They were able to worship because they too were pure. The people were pure, the priests were pure, and the law was pure, as was the tabernacle. It was furnished with the golden candlesticks along with the table of shewbread. The ark of the covenant was placed in the most holy place, the glory of God filled the tabernacle, and now it was to be the place that they were to come to offer their sacrifices. It had been two full years since they had left Egypt. They were now what they had not been when they left Egypt. They were an organized nation, a purified nation and a legalized nation.

Israel Celebrates the First Passover

Israel had also become a worshiping nation, so they celebrated the first Passover. It is not known what happened the first year, but they celebrated the first Passover in Numbers 9. All of Israel gathered in their own private homes. The Passover was not a public thing where they came to the tabernacle to serve God. It was a private thing. Everybody went into their house, gathered their family together, ate the unleavened bread and bitter herbs, and drank the wine as if the LORD were again passing over Egypt. They sang the slow music, the sad and mournful music because the death angel had passed by. It was not a joyous occasion, although it was a day that brought joy in that God had passed over them. But their souls were afflicted that night as they thought about all of the tragedies that God had allowed to happen that had brought them to this place.

Those tragedies had made it possible for them to serve Him with the joy with which they now served Him.

Today, when Christians partake of what is called the LORD'S Supper and we eat that little bit of unleavened bread and drink that little bit of the fruit of the vine, we do so with a degree of sadness. We look back to all that Jesus had to do, that His body had to be broken, that His blood had to be shed, and that He had to give the full measure of His life. But that mournful event and this mournful memorial bring great joy, because the memorial declares His death until He comes again, and it declares that we stand this day a part of His nation because of the sorrow of that bitter day on Calvary's hill. That is what the Passover did here. It declared to the people their victory and their joy because of the sadness of the passing over of the death angel.

The Silver Trumpets Discussed

In Numbers 10:1–10 some silver trumpets were to be made. These silver trumpets were to be the things that caused Israel to know what the LORD wanted of them. God would speak to the priest, he would blow a certain trumpet sound, and they would know that it was time to gather for an assembly. He would blow another trumpet sound, which would mean that it was time for them to go on the march. With another trumpet sound a warning would be given of coming enemies. The people were to go to their appointed places of defense and get ready to fight a war. There was another trumpet sound which the people would recognize to mean that they were supposed leave the place where they were and begin marching once again toward the promised land. The silver trumpets were great things in God's economy.

Taberah — “Burning”

With these silver trumpets, the incidents at Sinai ended, and God told the Israelites in Numbers 10 that they had stayed at this mountain long enough. God was now going to turn them northward. All that God had intended for them to learn had been learned, and it was now time for them to go to the promised land. As they left Mount Sinai, the first place they came to was called Taberah. It was not a city, but a place out in the desert, and they called it Taberah because Taberah means “burning.” In Numbers 10:11–11:3 the people murmured and grumbled. They still had not learned the lesson that they could trust God. He had provided them with water, bread, meat, protection, guidance, advice and comfort. He had provided everything they could ever need, and still they grumbled before God:

Now the people complained about their hardships in the hearing of the LORD, and when he heard them his anger was aroused. Then fire from the LORD burned among them and consumed some of the outskirts of the camp. When the people cried out to Moses, he prayed to the LORD and the fire died down. So that place was called Taberah, because fire from the LORD had burned among them (Numbers 11:1–3).

As the Israelites left that place, they left graves to mark the place where they had murmured.

From Taberah they journeyed to a place they called Kibroth Hattaavah, which means “graves of lust” (cf. Numbers 11:4–34). Israel was going to have to dig more graves for again they did exactly what they had done in Taberah. Digging those graves and burying their loved ones in Taberah had obviously not convinced them that they ought not to murmur. So at the next encampment they

murmured again, and this time God killed many more of them. God was doing His best to teach them that they needed to trust Him and quit their murmuring.

The New Testament says, "*Do everything without complaining or arguing*" (Philippians 2:14). Christians are to look at Israel in the wilderness and not murmur or grumble as they grumbled. Grumbling is unbelief, and we are saved by faith; we are not saved by unbelief. At Kibroth Hattaavah God told Moses that the work was getting too great for him, and besides, Moses was getting nearer the end of his experience with Israel. So He had Moses appoint seventy-two elders. There were seventy elders in the tent with Moses, and there were two more, Eldad and Medad, in the camp prophesying. They did not come to the tent to be appointed by Moses this day. In total there are seventy-two elders appointed in Israel. Moses laid his hands on them, and when Moses laid his hands on them the Spirit that was with Moses came to be with them. They were given the wisdom Moses had. They were given the power that Moses had. They became Moses' agents, in a sense, Moses' apostles. They were the people who served under Moses to dispense God's will throughout all of Israel.

God spoke to Moses, and Moses sent the seventy-two to do the will of God. The camp was divided so that everyone could be cared for by all the captains just as Jethro had advised Moses in Exodus 18. But there were still those who lusted after Egypt's things with the result that thousands of the people were killed. But now there were seventy-three people to represent God so that the people would not appoint a new captain and go back to Egypt.

From Kibroth Hattaavah, they came to Hazeroth. They were finally getting close enough to the promised land that they were approaching established settlements and established outposts. Hazeroth was one of those, located on the trade route where people would pause to stop and eat and

refresh themselves as they journeyed on toward their destination. Here at Hazeroth Aaron and Miriam murmured against Moses (cf. Numbers 12:1–15). Their murmuring against Moses dealt with jealousy that they had toward Moses:

Miriam and Aaron began to talk against Moses because of his Cushite wife, for he had married a Cushite. “Has the LORD spoken only through Moses?” they asked. “Hasn’t he also spoken through us?” And the LORD heard this (Numbers 12:1–2).

They also apparently had a problem with Moses’s wife. At some point in time Moses had married an Ethiopian woman. This was probably not Zipporah because she was a Midianite. This lady was a Cushite. But either way, Aaron and Miriam murmured against Moses because he had married someone outside of God’s family. That was what made them mad, and because they murmured against Moses, God appeared to them and said:

... “Listen to my words: ‘When a prophet of the LORD is among you, I reveal myself to him in visions, I speak to him in dreams. But this is not true of my servant Moses; he is faithful in all my house. With him I speak face to face, clearly and not in riddles; he sees the form of the LORD. Why then were you not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?’” (Numbers 12:6–8).

Moses was God’s prophet. Moses interceded for Miriam or she might have died as a leper. She spent seven days outside the camp, and the nation waited for her to be healed. Upon

their departure, they traveled to Kadesh Barnea (cf. Numbers 12–14). Israel was now on the edge of the promised land.

At this point, Moses sent twelve spies, one from each tribe, into the land. They all brought back one single report, “It is as God said. This is a land flowing with milk and honey, a land that will sustain all this nation.” As proof of what they had seen they brought a grapevine so big that it took two men to carry it so it could be shown to Moses. Ten of the spies told the people, “It is as God promised, but we cannot take it. There are giants in the land. We look like grasshoppers in their sight, and so there is no way that we can take this land.” However, Joshua and Caleb said, “Let’s go up and take it. It is like God said it would be, and we can take it.” But the people refused to listen to Joshua and Caleb, and instead they listened to the majority report. The majority is hardly ever right because most people do not follow God; most people do not have faith. Because the Israelites did not have faith, they would not listen to Joshua and Caleb.

God was angered over their lack of faith, so He said:

“How long will this wicked community grumble against me? I have heard the complaints of these grumbling Israelites. So tell them, ‘As surely as I live, declares the LORD, I will do to you the very things I heard you say: In this desert your bodies will fall — every one of you twenty years old or more who was counted in the census and who has grumbled against me. Not one of you will enter the land I swore with uplifted hand to make your home, except Caleb son of Jephunneh and Joshua son of Nun ... Your children will be shepherds here for forty years, suffering for your unfaithfulness, until the last of your bodies lies in the desert. For forty years — one year for each of the forty days you explored the land — you will suffer for your sins

and know what it is like to have me against you’”
(Numbers 14:27–34).

The people did not like this word from God. In fact, they disliked God’s Word so much that they tried to go in and take the land anyway. They were soundly defeated and returned to spend their lifetime wandering in the wilderness.

Christians can be grateful, however, that there is more to this story. It would be tragic if that was the end. Has God ever brought us to the edge of a promised land and asked us by faith to go in to take it? If so, have we ever told God no? Let us pray that we will have the faith at our Kadesh Barnea not to turn back and end up wandering in a wilderness of futility, but rather, to march forward and conquer a promised land of victory.

The Israelites’ Journey From Egypt to Canaan (Using Numbers 33:3–52)

The Israelites set out from Rameses on the fifteenth day of the first month, the day after the Passover. They marched out boldly in full view of all the Egyptians... The Israelites left Rameses and camped at Succoth...

- *Etham, on the edge of the desert...*
- *Pi Hahiroth, east of Baal Zephon, near Migdol...*
- *passed through the sea into the desert...*
- *traveled for three days in the Desert of Etham...*
- *camped at Marah...*
- *Elim... twelve springs and seventy palm trees...*
- *camped by the Red Sea...*
- *camped in the Desert of Sin...*
- *Dophkah...*
- *Alush...*
- *Rephidim ... [with] no water...*
- *camped in the Desert of Sinai...*
- *Kibroth Hattaavah...*

- *Hazeroth...*
- *Rithmah...*
- *Rimmon Perez...*
- *Libnah...*
- *Rissah...*
- *Kehelathah...*
- *Mount Sheper...*
- *Haradah...*
- *Makheloth...*
- *Tahath...*
- *Terah...*
- *Mithcah...*
- *Hashmonah...*
- *Moseroth...*
- *Bene Jaakan...*
- *Hor Haggidgad...*
- *Jotbathah...*
- *Abronah...*
- *Ezion Geber...*
- *Kadesh, in the Desert of Zin...*
- *Mount Hor, on the border of Edom ...Aaron the priest went up Mount Hor, where he died ...a hundred and twenty-three years old...*
- *Zalmonah...*
- *Punon...*
- *Oboth...*
- *Iye Abarim, on the border of Moab...*
- *Dibon Gad...*
- *Almon Diblathaim...*
- *mountains of Abarim, near Nebo...*
- *plains of Moab by the Jordan across from Jericho.*
- *There on the plains of Moab they camped along the Jordan from Beth Jeshimoth to Abel Shittim ...*
- *The LORD said to Moses: “Speak to the Israelites and say to them: ‘When you cross the Jordan into Canaan, drive out all the inhabitants of the land...’”*

The Exodus Experience (3)

Numbers and Deuteronomy

Review and Introduction

In the last chapter, Israel arrived at the edge of the promised land. They were ready to go in and conquer the land God had promised to Abraham. They sent twelve spies into the land, and when they returned they all came back with a single report: “God has told us the truth. It is a land flowing with milk and honey. It is a land that will sustain all of our great people. It is just as God has said. It is that kind of land, but we cannot take it because there are giants in the land. But God will not do what He said.” God had said, “This is the way the land will be, and I will give it to you.” They believed what their eyes could see about what God had promised, but they did not believe what they could not see. So they did not believe at all. For faith is being sure about what cannot be seen and confident about what has not been received.

However, two of the spies, Joshua and Caleb, had faith. They said, “Let us go take the land.” The people refused to listen to them, so God said, “You will not take the land for thirty-eight more years. You will wander in this wilderness. The shoes will not grow old on your feet nor the clothes on your back, and I will feed you. But you will not inherit the land I promised to Abraham because it is only for those who have faith.” The people were not satisfied with this, so they tried to take the land by themselves. They were soundly defeated.

The Exodus Experience — The Last Thirty-eight Years

Twelve Unknown Stations

The nation of Israel began its time of wandering. Numbers 15:1–19:22 lists twelve unknown stations. They are not unknown by name because they are listed in Numbers 33:19–30, but it is unknown where they are now.

In Numbers 15–19 and also in Exodus 33 (which is a summary of Numbers 15–19), five things are recorded that are very important to remember because these not only explain what was happening but what was going to happen with the people of God. In Numbers 15 ordinances are given concerning worship. There were certain sacrifices and ordinances that Israel was to follow during this time of wandering and also after they entered the promised land. So God used these thirty-eight years to train them in the way they were to worship when they got into the land. That was not for any of the people who were over twenty years old when they left Egypt. It was for the children who would inherit the promised land.

However, in Numbers 16 there was a second incident during this period of wandering. First, there were the ordinances for worship. And then there was the rebellion of Korah, Dathan, Abiram and On:

Korah son of Izhar, the son of Kohath, the son of Levi, and certain Reubenites — Dathan and Abiram, sons of Eliab, and On son of Peleth — became insolent and rose up against Moses. With them were 250 Israelite men, well-known community leaders who had been appointed members of the council. They came as a group to oppose Moses and Aaron and said to them, “You have gone too far! The whole community is holy,

every one of them, and the LORD is with them. Why then do you set yourselves above the LORD's assembly?" (Numbers 16:1–3).

Any time God's ordained leaders were questioned like this, the questioners were in trouble. Moses and Aaron had not set themselves up as rulers. God had chosen them. God had appointed them as leaders. These 254 people may have been leaders, but they were not leaders of faith:

When Moses heard this, he fell facedown. Then he said to Korah and all his followers: "In the morning the LORD will show who belongs to him and who is holy, and he will have that person come near him. The man he chooses he will cause to come near him. You, Korah, and all your followers are to do this: Take censers and tomorrow put fire and incense in them before the LORD. The man the LORD chooses will be the one who is holy. You Levites have gone too far!" (Numbers 16:4–7).

Most of the people involved in this rebellion were from the tribe of Levi. They were jealous that Aaron was high priest and jealous that Moses was the leader:

Moses also said to Korah, "Now listen, you Levites! Isn't it enough for you that the God of Israel has separated you from the rest of the Israelite community and brought you near himself to do the work at the LORD's tabernacle and to stand before the community and minister to them? He has brought you and all your fellow Levites near himself, but now you are trying to get the priesthood too" (Numbers 16:8–10).

Only the family of Aaron could be priests, but all of the Levites served God in the holy service in the tabernacle. But that wasn't enough for them. They wanted to have the place of honor. Numbers 16:11–13 reads:

"It is against the LORD that you and all your followers have banded together. Who is Aaron that you should grumble against him?" Then Moses summoned Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab. But they said, "We will not come! Isn't it enough that you have brought us up out of a land flowing with milk and honey to kill us in the desert? And now you also want to lord it over us?"

The people were always wanting to go back to Egypt. They wanted to be fed. But they had forgotten that they had to work from daylight to dark, seven days a week, to get the little bit of food and honey on their bread. All they could focus on was that they did not have food, water, or honey out in the wilderness. They were saying, "It is not enough that you brought us out here to kill us —

"...now you also want to lord it over us? Moreover, you haven't brought us into a land flowing with milk and honey or given us an inheritance of fields and vineyards. Will you gouge out the eyes of these men? No, we will not come!" (Numbers 16:13–14).

In other words, would Moses himself make slaves out of the men who came to meet him? They refused to report to Moses.

The truth of the matter was that Moses had given them a land flowing with milk and honey, but they had refused to take it. It is one thing to be given a land, and it is another to receive it. Moses had brought them to a land flowing with

milk and honey. All that they had to do was have the faith to go get it, but they did not have that faith.

Because of their lack of faith and their rebellion against Moses, Numbers 16:15–22 says:

Then Moses became very angry and said to the LORD, “Do not accept their offering. I have not taken so much as a donkey from them, nor have I wronged any of them.” Moses said to Korah, “You and all your followers are to appear before the LORD tomorrow — you and they and Aaron. Each man is to take his censer and put incense in it — 250 censers in all — and present it before the LORD. You and Aaron are to present your censers also.” So each man took his censer, put fire and incense in it, and stood with Moses and Aaron at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting. When Korah had gathered all his followers in opposition to them at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting, the glory of the LORD appeared to the entire assembly. The LORD said to Moses and Aaron, “Separate yourselves from this assembly so I can put an end to them at once.” But Moses and Aaron fell facedown and cried out, “O God, God of the spirits of all mankind, will you be angry with the entire assembly when only one man sins?”

Moses and Aaron both pleaded for the assembly. All the assembly of Israel would have died if Moses and Aaron had not pleaded with God for their lives. God heard Moses and Aaron, but there was still some punishment to be delivered:

Then the LORD said to Moses, “Say to the assembly, ‘Move away from the tents of Korah, Dathan and Abiram.’” ...So they moved away from the tents of

Korah, Dathan and Abiram.... Then Moses said, “This is how you will know that the LORD has sent me to do all these things and that it was not my idea: If these men die a natural death and experience only what usually happens to men, then the LORD has not sent me. But if the LORD brings about something totally new, and the earth opens its mouth and swallows them, with everything that belongs to them, and they go down alive into the grave, then you will know that these men have treated the LORD with contempt.” As soon as he finished saying all this, the ground under them split apart and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them, with their households and all Korah’s men and all their possessions (Numbers 16:23–24, 27–32).

The earth swallowed up Korah, Dathan, Abiram and 14,700 other men as God spoke very clearly that Moses and Aaron were His leaders:

But 14,700 people died from the plague, in addition to those who had died because of Korah. Then Aaron returned to Moses at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting, for the plague had stopped (Numbers 16:49–50).

God did not want Moses and Aaron’s authority to be questioned because they were leading the people in a time of rebellion, in a time of disobedience, when the leadership was even more essential than it would be in a time of peace and prosperity. Korah, Dathan, Abiram, On, 250 Levites, and 14,700 of the people were cut off and died so that Moses and Aaron’s leadership would be recognized in guiding the people to the promised land.

Sometimes it is difficult to understand why the LORD killed 14,700 people. But know one of two things: either those people deserved to die or God was delivering them from the evil environment they were in to bring them home to Himself. In one case it would be judgment because of sins committed, and in the other case it would be deliverance because of righteousness honored. Those people would die anyway because they had to die before the people of God could enter the promised land because they had rejected God at Kadesh Barnea.

The next thing that happened during these twelve unknown stations of wandering was the proof of priesthood. In Numbers 17:5 the LORD wanted to stop these people's grumbling about Aaron, so He said, "*The staff belonging to the man I choose will sprout, and I will rid myself of this constant grumbling against you by the Israelites.*" A staff is a dead stick, but this dead stick without any root and soil would sprout buds in order to prove that Aaron was the priest. When that happened the Israelites said to Moses: "...*We will die! We are lost, we are all lost! Anyone who even comes near the tabernacle of the LORD will die. Are we all going to die?*" God made it very plain that only Aaron could enter the holy of holies and only his sons could enter the holy place. The people also said they would die because they were lost with no hope and because if someone even went near the tabernacle they would die. If they touched the mount they would die. If they came near the tent of the tabernacle they would die. What hope did they have?

The fourth thing that occurred during this period of wandering was the Levites' support (cf. Numbers 18). The duties of the priests were given, but God also stated that they were to receive one-tenth of the tenth that went to God. All that the Jews gave went to support the Levites with Aaron's family receiving the tenth of the tenth. The tenth from the

people supported the Levites, and the Levites' tenth supported Aaron and his family.

In Numbers 19 the fifth thing in this period of twelve unknown stations was that the Day of Atonement was ordered, detailed and predicted. The Day of Atonement was the day when the people were to bring a sacrifice; it was to be offered on the altar, and their sins were to be remembered when they did that. They were to be remembering the fact that they were sinful, and the Day of Atonement was to keep them, in spite of their sin, in fellowship with God. As they offered the sacrifice, God honored their sacrifice and said the people were in fellowship with Him. During this period of wandering, God was not leaving them alone. It was not as if God was ignoring them. Rather, He was giving them ordinances for worship, He was correcting their desire to have the authority that belonged only to Moses and Aaron, He was establishing the house of Aaron as the priestly family, He was providing for the support of Levi and Aaron's households, and He was giving them the great day in which they could offer the sacrifice that God would accept as their work of faith and keep them in fellowship with Him on a national basis. The Day of Atonement was not so that the individual would be in fellowship with God; rather, the Day of Atonement was so that the nation could continue in fellowship with God and not wander into the sin that they did at the foot of the mountain when they made the golden calf. They would also not fall into the sin of Korah, Dathan, Abiram and On if they had a constant worship and a yearly reminder of the fact that they needed God, not only for their physical needs, but also for the spiritual forgiveness of sin.

Moserah

The fifteenth station on this exodus was Mount Hor and a city there called Moserah. It was here that God said the wandering was over. The people had fulfilled the time that

was set for them to wander in the wilderness prior to entering the promised land. The entire generation that had left Egypt who were twenty years or older were now dead with the exception of Aaron, who would die at this spot; Moses, who would die soon; and Joshua and Caleb who would get to enter the land because they were faithful at Kadesh Barnea. The rest of them had died. A new generation had risen. It was time to enter the promised land.

Here at Moserah on the top of Mount Hor, Aaron died. The first high priest of Israel had now passed away. Aaron, who was the right hand of Moses, who was the spokesman for Moses, who was the spokesman for God was now dead, and so another generation was to continue. The leaders must die before the people who were going to be the leaders would arise.

Ezion Geber, Kadesh Barnea, Mount Hor, and Elath

There are three stations where not much happened. The people did a little more wandering, picking up people who had stopped in various places. They traveled to Ezion Geber, Kadesh Barnea and back to Ezion Geber (cf. Numbers 20; 33:35–36). This traveling resulted in just one thing — gathering the people. This would be necessary during a wandering of millions of people. One group would stop to feed their sheep at one place and another group would stop to feed their sheep at another place.

All of the people were to cross the Jordan River and go into the land that God had promised to Abraham. So they gathered at a place called Elath. Elath and Ezion Geber were sister cities, one beside the other at the northern end of the Gulf of Aqaba. It was a copper mining place. Later, Solomon's copper mines would be found here. At Elath, the people did what they had been doing from the very beginning of their time with God. In Numbers 21 the people

murmured against God. This time God sent fiery serpents to strike the people, and hundreds and thousands of people began to die, so they appealed to Moses:

The people came to Moses and said, “We sinned when we spoke against the LORD and against you. Pray that the LORD will take the snakes away from us.” So Moses prayed for the people. The LORD said to Moses, “Make a snake and put it up on a pole; anyone who is bitten can look at it and live.” So Moses made a bronze snake and put it up on a pole. Then when anyone was bitten by a snake and looked at the bronze snake, he lived (Numbers 21:7–9).

It was not the serpent that healed them. It was not even the looking that healed them. The writer of Hebrews makes it plain that it was the faith that caused them to look that healed them. God has always saved people by faith, but it is a faith that does all that God says and does it because God said it.

The brass serpent was just a piece of brass, but they were to look at it. They were to look at that brass serpent, and in the looking they would live. This became a superstition to the people. They thought, “That serpent is something else. We need to carry that with us.” So they put that piece of brass in the ark of the covenant. That meant that the brass serpent was in the Most Holy Place when all that was supposed to be there was the ark of the covenant and inside of it the two tablets upon which Moses had rewritten the ten commandments after he had broken the original edition that God had written. That was all that was supposed to be there: God’s ark and God’s law. And God’s man was to go there once a year to meet God. But the people put that piece of brass there, and it would stay there until the days of

Hezekiah, a king of Judah. It is amazing how superstitious people can be even when they have the revelation of God.

Valley of Moab/Plains of Jordan

In Deuteronomy 28–30 is an additional covenant that God made with Israel apart from the one He made at Sinai. The word “Deuteronomy” comes from two Greek words **deuteros**, which means “second,” and **nomos**, which means “law.” So this is the second law. It is not literally a second law, but the law as it was repeated to the people. The Book of Deuteronomy is the law repeated. Pay attention to the fact that this time when God gave the law, He often gave the reason for that law. It is similar to Jesus, who, when He discussed a law or principle such as in the Sermon of the Mount, He also told them what was behind that law. That is what Deuteronomy does that Exodus does not do. For instance, when God was repeating the ten commandments when He got to the one that says, “*‘Observe the Sabbath day by keeping it holy...’*” (Exodus 20:8). He did not simply make the statement, He told them why:

“Observe the Sabbath day by keeping it holy, as the LORD your God has commanded you ...the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God... Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and that the LORD your God brought you out of there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Therefore the LORD your God has commanded you to observe the Sabbath day” (Deuteronomy 5:12–15).

Israel had the Passover to observe yearly and the Sabbath day to observe weekly as reminders that they were under obligation to God. They were to give praise and glory to Him for His work in delivering them out of the tragedy of Egypt. God is gracious in that He gives His people reminders

of our deliverance and His power. We have one such reminder every LORD'S day, as was mentioned earlier. As we eat the bread and drink the fruit of the vine we are declaring His death until He comes. We are remembering that He died for us. We are honoring God for His great deeds and the great power that He places into our lives.

After the whole law was recited, God gave a new covenant. It was an additional covenant to Israel with the covenant He gave at Sinai. This covenant is found in Deuteronomy 28–30. It explains the way God promised to deal with His people. Notice the “ifs” that are there — “if you obey the *LORD* your God ...”

*If you fully obey the *LORD* your God and carefully follow all his commands I give you today, the *LORD* your God will set you high above all the nations on earth. All these blessings will come upon you and accompany you if you obey the *LORD* your God: You will be blessed in the city and blessed in the country. The fruit of your womb will be blessed, and the crops of your land and the young of your livestock — the calves of your herds and the lambs of your flocks. Your basket and your kneading trough will be blessed. You will be blessed when you come in and blessed when you go out. The *LORD* will grant that the enemies who rise up against you will be defeated before you. They will come at you from one direction but flee from you in seven. The *LORD* will send a blessing on your barns and on everything you put your hand to. The *LORD* your God will bless you in the land he is giving you. The *LORD* will establish you as his holy people, as he promised you on oath, if you keep the commands of the *LORD* your God and walk in his ways. Then all the peoples on earth will see that you are called*

by the name of the LORD, and they will fear you. The LORD will grant you abundant prosperity — in the fruit of your womb, the young of your livestock and the crops of your ground — in the land he swore to your forefathers to give you. The LORD will open the heavens, the storehouse of his bounty, to send rain on your land in season and to bless all the work of your hands. You will lend to many nations but will borrow from none. The LORD will make you the head, not the tail. If you pay attention to the commands of the LORD your God that I give you this day and carefully follow them, you will always be at the top, never at the bottom. Do not turn aside from any of the commands I give you today, to the right or to the left, following other gods and serving them (Deuteronomy 28:1–14).

The Israelites would be blessed in every way, but then in Deuteronomy 28:15 God said:

“However, if you do not obey the LORD your God and do not carefully follow all his commands and decrees I am giving you today, all these curses will come upon you and overtake you.”

God said: “I will curse you in every way I promised to bless you. I will curse you when you go out and when you come in. I will curse the fruit of the womb. I will curse the land. I will curse everything, and I will put you in captivity. I will take you away from the land where you are and will scatter you” (cf. Deuteronomy 28:64). “I will scatter you among all the nations. I will give you an anxious mind. I will give you eyes weary with longing. I will give you a despairing heart. You will be in constant suspense. In the evening you will wish it were morning, and in the morning you will wish it

were evening. You will wish for Me to send you back to Egypt in ships. Your males will be for sale, and your females will become other people's wives. I will make you so cursed that nobody will buy you."

However, in Deuteronomy 29–30 God said that if they remembered Him according to the law and repented and turned to do His will, then He would bring them back from that captivity and bless them again in this land. That covenant would govern all that happened to Israel from this time forward. When they were obedient, they were blessed. When they were not, they were cursed. That is the covenant of blessing and cursing, and it will be discussed many times in future studies.

In the last chapter of Deuteronomy, Deuteronomy 34, Moses died. He climbed to the top of Pisgah and looked at the promised land. Moses did not get to enter the promised land, but he did get to see it. He would enter it later on the mount of transfiguration when he stood with Jesus, but he did not get to enter it as long as he was living. Deuteronomy 34:5–7 says:

And Moses the servant of the LORD died there in Moab, as the LORD had said. He [the LORD] buried him in Moab, in the valley opposite Beth Peor, but to this day no one knows where his grave is. Moses was a hundred and twenty years old when he died, yet his eyes were not weak nor his strength gone.

Why did he die then? His work was done. It was time for Joshua to serve, so the Israelites prepared for life without Moses:

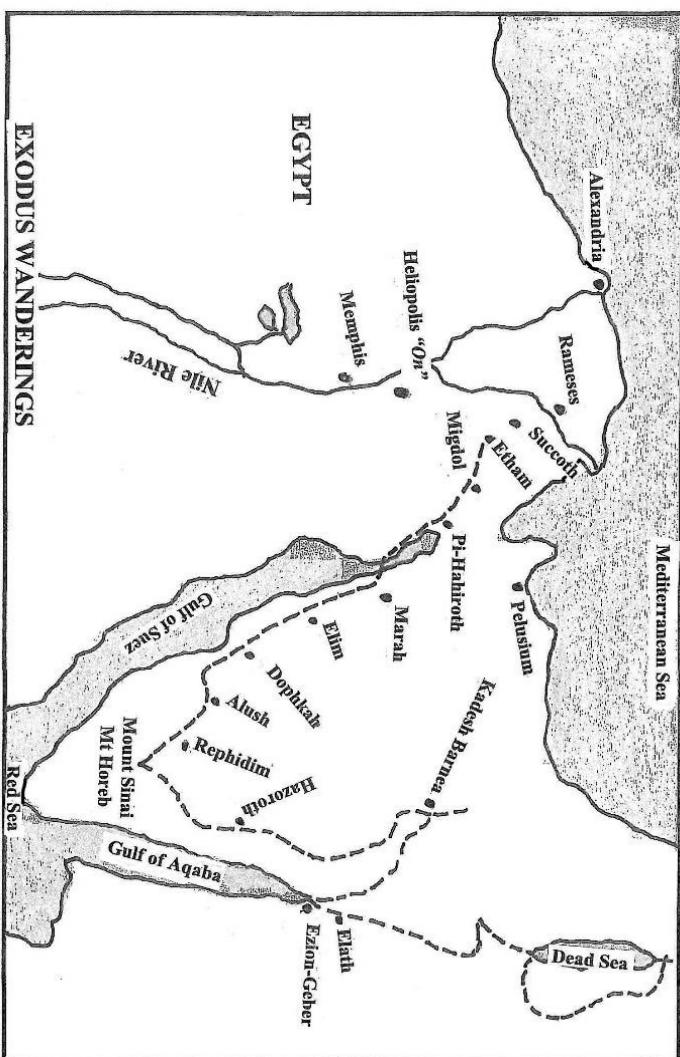
The Israelites grieved for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days, until the time of weeping and mourning was over. Now Joshua son of Nun was

filled with the spirit of wisdom because Moses had laid his hands on him. So the Israelites listened to him and did what the LORD had commanded Moses (Deuteronomy 34:8–9).

There follows a powerful epitaph for Moses:

Since then, no prophet has risen in Israel like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face, who did all those miraculous signs and wonders the LORD sent him to do in Egypt — to Pharaoh and to all his officials and to his whole land. For no one has ever shown the mighty power or performed the awesome deeds that Moses did in the sight of all Israel (Deuteronomy 34:10–12).

The most powerful leader Israel ever had was this man, Moses. But Joshua was now the leader of Israel.



Conquest of the East Bank

Numbers 21:21–31:54

Introduction

This is the last chapter in the study of the history of the Hebrew family, which has been the first division of Old Testament history. The previous chapter followed the flow of that history all the way through the death of Moses.

The Amorites and Israel — Central Campaign

Israel's Request

At this point it will be helpful to go back in time and look at the conquest east of the Jordan, which occurred while Moses was still alive. This portion of land was not really part of the promised land, because as it says in Numbers 34:3–12, the eastern boundary was the Jordan River. But the Israelites needed to conquer this land because, although they would rather have just crossed the Jordan River and began conquering the promised land, Sihon and some other kings who ruled over the land east of the Jordan River refused to cooperate. So Israel had to conquer the land. Two and a half tribes of Israel desired this land and settled there. So the conquering of this territory was an important consideration and an important study. Numbers 21 records three campaigns that took place on the east side of the Jordan that resulted in Israel conquering what might be called “bonus land.” In other words, it was more land than had originally

been promised to Israel. The text begins with Israel's request:

Israel sent messengers to say to Sihon king of the Amorites: “Let us pass through your country. We will not turn aside into any field or vineyard, or drink water from any well. We will travel along the king’s highway until we have passed through your territory” (Numbers 21:21–22).

The king's highway is interesting. It was the highway that the kings of Egypt used to communicate with the kings of Mesopotamia. It was a flat, rocky place where chariots could be driven with speed. It was a well-traveled and well-worn highway.

King Sihon's Negative Response and Its Consequences

Israel said to Sihon, “We will stay on the main road. We will stay on the highway. We will not get off into the countryside, nor will we bother any of your country.” The response from Sihon was:

But Sihon would not let Israel pass through his territory. He mustered his entire army and marched out into the desert against Israel. When he reached Jahaz, he fought with Israel. Israel, however, put him to the sword and took over his land from the Arnon [which is about halfway down the Dead Sea] to the Jabbok [which is about halfway between the Dead Sea and the Sea of Galilee], but only as far as the Ammonites, because their border was fortified (Numbers 21:23–24).

Joshua could not conquer the Ammonite territory, but he did take all of Sihon's territory, the territory of the Amorites:

Israel captured all the cities of the Amorites and occupied them, including Heshbon and all its surrounding settlements. Heshbon was the city of Sihon king of the Amorites, who had fought against the former king of Moab and had taken from him all his land as far as the Arnon (Numbers 21:25–26).

Having gained the victory, Israel celebrated in song, which was called the Song of Arnon. It talked about that victory (cf. Numbers 21:27–30). Then Numbers 21:31 says “*So Israel settled in the land of the Amorites.*” This could be called the Central campaign. Joshua passed through the country of Moab and took this central territory between the two seas down into the land paralleling the northern end of the Dead Sea. This campaign took all of the central territory east of the Jordan from Sihon. The land was called Gilead and the tribe was Amorite.

Israel and King of Bashan — Northern Campaign

The Enemy

Numbers 21:32–33 says:

After Moses had sent spies to Jazer, the Israelites captured its surrounding settlements and drove out the Amorites who were there. Then they turned and went up along the road toward Bashan, and Og king of Bashan and his whole army marched out to meet them in battle at Edrei.

Bashan was a northern territory up near the waters of Merom and extending nearly all the way to Damascus. It was a very fertile land, a land where great cattle herds were found.

The Victory Given

Israel did not want to wage war against Bashan. They just wanted to pass through the land. But here came the king of a powerful country to encounter Moses. However, God spoke to Moses and said:

... “Do not be afraid of him, for I have handed him over to you, with his whole army and his land. Do to him what you did to Sihon king of the Amorites, who reigned in Heshbon.” So they struck him down, together with his sons and his whole army, leaving them no survivors. And they took possession of his land (Numbers 21:34–35).

Joshua, in two great battles, had conquered all the land from the northern end of the Dead Sea to the city of Damascus in Syria. The only thing that remained were the plains of Moab, where they first camped as they entered the promised land. The plains of Moab extend from the northern end of the Dead Sea to the southern end of the Dead Sea. Many of the events recorded in the Book of Numbers occurred in this area.

Israel and Moab — Southern Campaign

Balak of Moab, King of the Midianites

Numbers 22–31:54 tells the story of the conquest of Moab, the southernmost area east of the Jordan River:

Then the Israelites traveled to the plains of Moab and camped along the Jordan across from Jericho.

Now Balak, son of Zippor [who was the king of this area] saw all that Israel had done to the Amorites, and Moab was terrified because there were so many people. Indeed, Moab was filled with dread because of the Israelites (Numbers 22:1–3).

Remember that when Israel left Egypt there were over 600,000 men. In the Book of Numbers, when Moses and Eliezer took a census of the people, there were over 600,000 men over twenty years of age who could go to battle. This was a powerful army. That meant there would be over two million people camped on the plains of Moab with all of their flocks, all of their herds, and all of their servants. This would be terrifying to the inhabitants of the land. Imagine the number of tents that would be spread in that valley to house two million-plus people. No wonder Moab was afraid: “*The Moabites said to the elders of Midian, ‘This horde is going to lick up everything around us, as an ox licks up the grass of the field’...”* (Numbers 22:4).

Balak’s Alliance with Balaam

The Moabites were afraid they were about to be devoured:

...So Balak son of Zippor, who was king of Moab at that time, sent messengers to summon Balaam son of Beor, who was at Pethor, near the River [this would be the Euphrates], in his native land ... (Numbers 22:4–5).

The Moabites went all the way to Mesopotamia to get this prophet to come and curse the people of God. It may be hard to keep these two men apart but remember that Balak was the king and Balaam was the prophet. Here is what Balak, the king, said to Balaam, the prophet:

...Balak said: “A people has come out of Egypt; they cover the face of the land and have settled next to me. Now come and put a curse on these people, because they are too powerful for me. Perhaps then I will be able to defeat them and drive them out of the country. For I know that those you bless are blessed, and those you curse are cursed” (Numbers 22:5–6).

Balaam was a prophet of God. He was a true prophet, but he did not have a true heart. He desired money more than he desired his office and his work. But he was a prophet of God, and up until this time and from this time, everything he said that came from God, came to pass:

The elders of Moab and Midian left, taking with them the fee for divination. When they came to Balaam, they told him what Balak had said. [That is, “If you will come curse these people, all this money is yours.”] “Spend the night here,” Balaam said to them, “and I will bring you back the answer the LORD gives me.” So the Moabite princes stayed with him. God came to Balaam and asked, “Who are these men with you?” [God was not asking for information here. He is all knowing. So why was He asking this?] Balaam said to God, “Balak son of Zippor, king of Moab, sent me this message: ‘A people that has come out of Egypt covers the face of the land. Now come and put a curse on them for me. Perhaps then I will be able to fight them and drive them away.’” But God said to Balaam, “Do not go with them. You must not put a curse on those people, because they are blessed” (Numbers 22:7–9).

Balaam's Response

Balaam's word could not counterbalance God's word. God had already said, "These are blessed people," so it did not matter what Balaam or Balak said. God did not want Balaam, His prophet, violating His will. Armed with those words from God, "*The next morning Balaam got up and said to Balak's princes, 'Go back to your own country, for the LORD has refused to let me go with you'*" (Numbers 22:13).

It seemed that Balaam had overcome his desire for money and was going to serve God. However, the story continues:

So the Moabite princes returned to Balak and said, "Balaam refused to come with us." Then Balak sent other princes, more numerous and more distinguished than the first. [As is mentioned later, he also sent more money.] They came to Balaam and said: "This is what Balak son of Zippor says: Do not let anything keep you from coming to me, because I will reward you handsomely and do whatever you say. Come and put a curse on these people for me." [If what I have given you is not enough, then you tell me how much you want, and I will see that you get it.] Now watch Balaam's speech. It is right and sounds so good.] But Balaam answered them, "Even if Balak gave me his palace filled with silver and gold, I could not do anything great or small to go beyond the command of the LORD my God" (Numbers 22:14–18).

If Balaam had said at this point for the princes to go back to Balak and tell him exactly what he had just said, then Balaam would have continued to be the honorable, true and faithful prophet of God. But notice what he said in addition to his earlier comments. In Numbers 22:19 Balaam,

who had just stated some great words, said, “*Now stay here tonight as the others did, and I will find out what else the LORD will tell me.*” Now the LORD has already told him what to do, and the LORD had not changed His mind. God had already said, “These are blessed people.” Balaam must have been hoping that God had changed His mind. God had an answer for Balaam: “*That night God came to Balaam and said, ‘Since these men have come to summon you, go with them, but [watch this condition] do only what I tell you’*” (Numbers 22:20).

God had said, “Do not do anything unless I tell you to do it. Do not say anything that I did not tell you to say. Stop with the words I tell you to speak.” Balaam was glad because now he would get the money. But God was displeased with Balaam. Yes, God did tell Balaam to go, but that did not mean that He was pleased with him. This was about to become very evident to Balaam as he traveled with his donkey:

Balaam got up in the morning, saddled his donkey and went with the princes of Moab. But God was very angry when he went, and the angel of the LORD stood in the road to oppose him. Balaam was riding on his donkey, and his two servants were with him. When the donkey saw the angel of the LORD ... (Numbers 22:21–23).

Why didn’t Balaam see the angel? Balaam was not innocent. The donkey was innocent, and the pure in heart can always see God. So this donkey with an innocent heart saw the angel “*...standing in the road with a drawn sword in his hand she turned off the road into a field. Balaam beat her to get her back on the road*” (Numbers 22:23). The donkey was trying to save Balaam’s life, and Balaam was

beating the donkey. The donkey was smarter than Balaam was right here:

Then the angel of the LORD stood in a narrow path between two vineyards, with walls on both sides. When the donkey saw the angel of the LORD, she pressed close to the wall, crushing Balaam's foot against it. So he beat her again (Numbers 22:24–25).

Again the donkey was trying to save Balaam's life, yet Balaam was beating the donkey:

Then the angel of the LORD moved on ahead and stood in a narrow place where there was no room to turn, either to the right or to the left. When the donkey saw the angel of the LORD, she lay down under Balaam and he was angry and beat her with his staff. [Watch carefully what happened in Numbers 22:28] *Then the LORD opened the donkey's mouth, and she said to Balaam, "What have I done to you to make you beat me these three times?"* (Numbers 22:26–28).

The strange thing here is that Balaam did not seem surprised that his donkey was talking to him. So he began conversing with the donkey:

Balaam answered the donkey, "You have made a fool of me! If I had a sword in my hand, I would kill you right now." The donkey said to Balaam, "Am I not your own donkey, which you have always ridden, to this day? Have I been in the habit of doing this to you?" "No," he said. Then the LORD opened Balaam's eyes, and he saw the angel of the

LORD standing in the road with his sword drawn. So he bowed low and fell facedown (Numbers 22:29–31).

Balaam was fortunate that he was alive. But he was only alive because of the actions of the donkey. And the angel spoke to Balaam:

The angel of the LORD asked him, “Why have you beaten your donkey these three times? I have come here to oppose you because your path is a reckless one before me. The donkey saw me and turned away from me these three times. If she had not turned away, I would certainly have killed you by now, but I would have spared her.” Balaam said to the angel of the LORD, “I have sinned. I did not realize you were standing in the road to oppose me. Now if you are displeased, I will go back” (Numbers 22:32–34).

Balaam appeared to be totally honest in this statement of his. He may not necessarily have been pleased because he would have still liked the money, but he was willing to go back, “*The angel of the LORD said to Balaam, ‘Go with the men, but speak only what I tell you’ ...*” (Numbers 22:35). Notice once again that he was told to speak no less and no more than what God had told him to speak:

...So Balaam went with the princes of Balak. When Balak heard that Balaam was coming, he went out to meet him at the Moabite town on the Arnon border, at the edge of his territory. Balak said to Balaam, “Did I not send you an urgent summons? Why didn’t you come to me? Am I really not able to reward you?” “Well, I have come to you now,”

Balaam replied. “But can I say just anything? I must speak only what God puts in my mouth” (Numbers 22:35–38).

The two men made a great sacrifice and got ready for Balaam to curse Israel. Numbers 23 gives the first of Balaam's oracles:

Balaam said, “Build me seven altars here, and prepare seven bulls and seven rams for me.” Balak did as Balaam said, and the two of them offered a bull and a ram on each altar. Then Balaam said to Balak, “Stay here beside your offering while I go aside. Perhaps the LORD will come to meet with me. Whatever he reveals to me I will tell you.” Then he went off to a barren height. God met with him, and Balaam said, “I have prepared seven altars, and on each altar I have offered a bull and a ram.” The LORD put a message in Balaam's mouth and said, “Go back to Balak and give him this message.” So he went back to him and found him standing beside his offering, with all the princes of Moab. Then Balaam uttered his oracle: “Balak brought me from Aram, the king of Moab from the eastern mountains. ‘Come,’ he said, ‘curse Jacob for me; come, denounce Israel.’ How can I curse those whom God has not cursed? How can I denounce those whom the LORD has not denounced? From the rocky peaks I see them, from the heights I view them. I see people who live apart and do not consider themselves one of the nations. Who can count the dust of Jacob or number the fourth part of Israel? Let me die the death of the righteous, and may my end be like theirs!” (Numbers 23:1–10).

Balaam wanted to be a part of them in the prophecy. Balak's response was predictable:

Balak said to Balaam, “What have you done to me? I brought you to curse my enemies, but you have done nothing but bless them!” He answered, “Must I not speak what the LORD puts in my mouth?” (Numbers 23:11–12).

Balak was not at all satisfied with this, so he took Balaam to another place hoping that there Balaam would place the curse on Israel. God put a second oracle into Balaam's mouth. God sent Balaam back with another message for Balak:

So he went to him and found him standing beside his offering, with the princes of Moab. Balak asked him, “What did the LORD say?” Then he uttered his oracle: “Arise, Balak, and listen: hear me, son of Zippor. God is not a man, that he should lie, nor a son of man, that he should change his mind. Does he speak and then not act? Does he promise and not fulfill? I have received a command to bless; he has blessed, and I cannot change it. No misfortune is seen in Jacob, no misery observed in Israel. The LORD their God is with them; the shout of the King is among them. God brought them out of Egypt; they have the strength of a wild ox. There is no sorcery against Jacob, no divination against Israel. It will now be said of Jacob and of Israel, ‘See what God has done!’ The people rise like a lioness; they rouse themselves like a lion that does not rest till he devours his prey and drinks the blood of his victims” (Numbers 23:17–24).

Balak was furious, “...*'Neither curse them at all nor bless them at all!'*” (Numbers 23:25). Again Balaam said, “I can only do what God tells me to do.” This, also, did not satisfy Balak. He wanted to take Balaam to another place, and maybe there Balaam would curse Israel. God, of course, would not allow that to happen, and so He gave Balaam a third oracle. Balaam went and delivered the third oracle as is recorded in Numbers 24:1–9. The same thing was repeated once more and God blessed Israel. They could not be cursed:

“...May those who bless you be blessed and those who curse you be cursed!” Then Balak’s anger burned against Balaam. He struck his hands together and said to him, “I summoned you to curse my enemies, but you have blessed them these three times. Now leave at once and go home! I said I would reward you handsomely, but the LORD has kept you from being rewarded” (Numbers 24:9–11).

Balaam’s potential reward was removed. He got nothing from Balak. Balaam gave a fourth oracle and finally a fifth oracle. In both oracles, God blessed these people; Balaam could not curse them. God blessed these people. Balak could not defeat them. So Balaam left seemingly with no money.

However, the story is not yet over, “*Then Balaam got up and returned home and Balak went his own way*” (Numbers 24:25). If that had been all that was said of Balaam, he would seem to be faithful; he had only said what God had put in his mouth. But there is more:

While Israel was staying in Shittim, the men began to indulge in sexual immorality with Moabite women, who invited them to the sacrifices to their gods. The people ate and bowed down before these

gods. So Israel joined in worshiping the Baal of Peor. And the LORD'S anger burned against them.

Numbers 25:9 records that 24,000 people were killed because of the plague that God sent on the people because they were bowing down to the god of Peor. What did this have to do with Balaam? Numbers 31:15–16 says that at the end of the war with Moab and Midian, Moses asked the military commanders:

"Have you allowed all the women to live?" he asked them. "They were the ones who followed Balaam's advice and were the means of turning the Israelites away from the LORD in what happened at Peor, so that a plague struck the LORD'S people."

Notice that what Balaam could not do with his curse, he did with his counsel. He had said everything that God had told him to say, but he obviously added to what God had said. He said, "I can't curse these people because they are blessed. You cannot defeat these people because they are blessed. But if you can just get them to compromise, if you get them to marry your women and marry your sons and worship your gods, then God will do the rest." And God slaughtered 24,000 Israelites in one day. That did not cause them to be unable to defeat the Midianites, for God is not limited in His ability to save, whether it be with few or many, but Israel was cursed because they followed Balaam's advice of compromise.

This will be brought up again in the Book of Revelation. This is an example of why it is important to study Old Testament history. One of the churches of Asia Minor was cursed because they followed the counsel of Balaam. What was the counsel of Balaam? It was to compromise. Compromise the unique standing a Christian has with God,

and God will do the rest. It is good that we think about this. We are a unique people if we are called by God. God has called us to be a peculiar people (cf. 1 Peter 2:9–10). We are a people set apart, a people different from other people. We live in heavenly places. We are blessed with heavenly blessings. We follow a heavenly High Priest. We are the heavenly people of God, and to compromise that is to bring upon ourselves the judgment that was brought upon Israel because they followed the counsel of Balaam.

What has been covered in this chapter so far was while Moses was still living. Israel conquered all of the land east of the Jordan. They not only would possess that promised land west of the Jordan, but they also conquered Sihon of Gilead, Og of Bashan, and Balak of Moab. The battle with Moab was the hardest battle. It was a hard-fought battle, which took several battles, but finally the whole nation fell to God. Israel now possessed the land that two and a half tribes of the twelve would live in.

Closing Arrangements Before the Promised Land

In Numbers 26 Moses and Eleazar took a census. This was not a war census, which they were forbidden to take. Rather, this was a care census. They needed to know who the people were, where the people were, and how many of the people there were because they were about to enter the promised land and dwell in settled cities. Through the taking of this census they would also know how many men there were for battle because the time had come for war. They had already fought three great battles, and now they were about to cross the Jordan River and fight against the most powerful tribes in the land. Joshua, the general, needed to know where his people were.

In Numbers 27:12–14 Moses was warned of his death, being told by God that he was about to go the way of all

mankind. God appointed Joshua to be the leader of His people. Deuteronomy 34:9 tells of Joshua and his preparation by Moses and God to lead Israel:

Now Joshua son of Nun was filled with the spirit of wisdom because Moses had laid his hands on him. So the Israelites listened to him and did what the LORD had commanded Moses.

Israel was no longer the family of Abraham. They had become the nation of Israel, and Joshua was about to lead that nation across the Jordan River to conquer the land promised to Abraham. Joshua would set them up as an established, legalized nation with him as the first ruler. Judges would follow him, and then kings would follow the judges. The second segment of Old Testament History will focus on the history of the Hebrew nation.



RICHARD ROGERS (1936-2000) was born in Dallas, Texas. He was educated at Abilene Christian University, and Florida Christian College.

He was an avid reader, a diligent student of the Bible, and authored some twenty teaching workbooks and published outlines. Richard was well-known as a gifted evangelist, teacher, and lectureship speaker.

Until his death he was in great demand as a missionary encourager and world evangelist.

He taught for more than three decades at Sunset International Bible Institute, assisting in the training of thousands of preachers and missionaries. Richard mentored church planting teams in California, Mexico, Thailand, and the Philippines.

During his ministry career, he also preached for local congregations at Blue Ridge, Azle, and Midland, Texas as well as the Sunset Church of Christ in Lubbock, Texas. Speaking appointments took him to forty states and thirty foreign countries and to many Christian university campuses as a teacher and lecturer. He was also a frequent speaker at soul-winning workshops and lectureships across the nation.

Richard can still be heard proclaiming the word of God via hundreds of audio and video sermons and lessons available through Sunset External Studies and in the Sunset Digital Library mobile app.

Richard and his wife Barbara were blessed with four children and many grandchildren.

ISBN 978-0-9755183-1-1

90000

9 780975 518311

SUNSET
INSTITUTE PRESS

3710 34th Street • Lubbock, TX 79410
800-687-2121 • www.extensionschool.com